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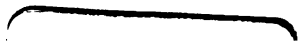


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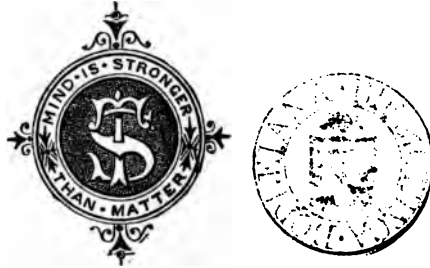
NOT TO BE BROKEN.

NOT TO BE BROKEN.

A Nobel.

BY

W. A. CHANDLER.



London:

SAMUEL TINSLEY, PUBLISHER,
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NOT TO BE BROKEN.

CHAPTER I.

A GOOD BUSINESS.

IN the purlieus of Spitalfields Market there stood, some twenty years ago, a coffee house;—a rather dingy-looking edifice, three stories high, “double fronted” as to its lower story, that is to say, there was a window on each side of the doorway, and the swing-doors, which opened into the coffee-room, were about three feet further in than the outer door, thus forming a pleasant wind-and-rain-sheltered lobby, much frequented by market loafers in bad weather. In each window was generally exhibited a dish of chops or steak, which might have sat for their

pictures; so beautifully did the fat and lean run into each other, that flesh-eaters could hardly help casting a passing glance, or stopping to admire.

The inside of the establishment was not unlike coffee-rooms in similar localities at the present day; there were five full-sized compartments on either side of the room, each with its table and high-backed seat, so that at a pinch four eaters could face four, in each compartment—although, even at the busiest time of day, the capabilities of the building were never so severely taxed. The two stalls nearest the door were robbed of half their dimensions by the lobby; but they formed delightfully-retired, cosy corners for slow feeders, or for those who liked to take a long spell at the newspapers.

Behind the public room, and separated from it by a six-foot partition, with a swing-door in its centre, came the family parlour and kitchen, combined in one. This arrangement possessed a reciprocal

advantage—the customers could hear the conversation of the proprietors, and *vice versa*.

The family consisted of Mrs. Dumlin, her husband, four grown-up sons, a married daughter—and occasionally her husband,—and their infant son, aged about three.

Mrs. Dumlin, aged about fifty, looked like a rather loosely-packed bag of rags tied in the middle. During business hours she generally wore an unstarched printed cotton dress, of rather obtrusive pattern, which decidedly added to her generally ragged appearance; her cap had a frill round the front, and she looked not altogether unlike a large animated rag doll, lacking only that air of intense repose which distinguishes dolls in general, and rag dolls in particular; for Mrs. Dumlin was a busy, stirring woman, nearly always on her feet—either cooking, or serving, or drawing coffee from the corpulent steamer, which stood on one side of the large range. When the

whole family happened to be in the private sanctum at the same time, her greatest difficulty consisted in clearing sufficient room for locomotion; whenever she moved she had to elbow aside her family in a heap, adjuring them at the same time to "get out o' my way do;" but they were always saved the trouble of volition on the matter, the words being simultaneous with, or preceded by, a push, which effectually served to pioneer the way. It would be unjust to the memory of an industrious woman to allow it to be thought that Mrs. Dumlin' never paid attention to her personal appearance. On Sundays, when she drove out to Epping Forest or to Anerley Gardens with her husband and the greater part of the family, in a four-wheeler, she was always gorgeously arrayed; in fact, that much over-rated monarch Solomon, in all his glory, would have looked neutral beside her, in the matter of variety and brightness of colour, with the one exception of

her bonnet, the treatment of which could hardly be called fair. Originally costing perhaps a guinea or more, and built of good black silk or satin, "drawn" on canes, with a lining of pink or some other gay colour, it was always lying *perdu*, at a disadvantage, in some remote and improper corner. Whenever Mrs. Dumlin was about to go out, she might be observed using her elbows pretty freely, and looking about in out-of-the-way places; presently the missing bonnet would be discovered somewhere on the floor, occupied either by the cat or dog, or it would perhaps be found on a low shelf by the side of the fireplace, where it had been used by the child as a convenient receptacle for hard crusts of buttered toast, or fag-ends of greasy-baked plum puddings; consequently, when this much-abused head-dress had been bent into something like its proper shape, it was not surprising that it should look scarcely in keeping with the rest of its owner's attire; insomuch that

her husband remarked on every such occasion, "If ever I go out again with you old gal in that unredeemed bonnet I'm lost," or words to that effect; but as week after week went by the bonnet waxed not newer, and Mr. Dumlin continued to ride beside his wife in the four-wheeler, it is to be hoped that the dismal forebodings about his perdition had no effect on his ultimate salvation.

Mrs. Dumlin's activity being so great there was no occupation for her husband in the business; he, therefore, followed his trade of journeyman saddle-maker at a shop hard by. He was seldom seen without a long leathern apron extending from his shirt-collar to nearly down to his ankles, tied tightly at the waist, viz., about four inches below his chin. His rather expansive corporation commencing exactly where his short waist ended, seemed to have a tendency to balance him forward on to his nose; and when standing or walking he always looked to lean well backwards on account of

the excessive weight he had to carry in front.

He was verging on sixty; his voice was rather squeaky; and his face forcibly reminded one of an old bell wether's.

The sons all looked as though they would probably resemble their father by the time they reached his age, and they had that soft, silly, sawny expression, which often betokens an owner very difficult to get the better of in money matters. Three of them were married, but having differences with their wives, they lived *en garçon*, and fed regularly at the parental coffee house, free of charge; for although they were thoroughly capable of taking care of coin when once gotten, none of them were money makers of much power; reckoning the aptitude for money-earning of the ordinary mechanic at that of six horses, the Dumlin sons could hardly be said to average more than four horse power; they were named Walter, Harry, James, and Ephraim. Their father's name was William, and

his sons, although they were all born in London, always addressed him as "Willum," and spoke of him as the "old man;" the country growers who were customers of long standing all called him "Willum," and the sons had probably learnt this provincial form of the name from them.

But the pet of the family, the apple of their eye, was the youngest daughter Lydia, aged seventeen, so pretty in face, and graceful in figure, that even her brothers thought her handsome, and felt almost as much pleasure in looking at her, as if she had not been a blood relation; their language often the reverse of parliamentary, was pitched in a minor key when she happened to be present, and they looked on her as a being of a totally different order to themselves, and to their married sister Susan, who was excessively plain, not to say ugly. In fact "little Lyddy" was as unlike the rest of the family as though she had been a fairy changling. Animal spirits—a quality

which can hardly be successfully simulated—she possessed in an extraordinary degree, and this, in addition to her youth and beauty, made her simply irresistible. At the age of sixteen her parents had “apprenticed her to the millinery.”

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW.

ANY one who is able to state off hand, without special fore-knowledge, where Norton Folgate ends, and where Shore-ditch begins, must possess a strongly developed bump of locality. In one of these two thoroughfares, twenty years ago there stood a milliner's shop. At the present day, if it still existed, it would probably possess a handsome plate glass window, consisting of one or two large panes at most; at that time, the panes were as small as those of an ordinary middle class dwelling house of the period. The proprietress, Mrs. Frumpton, was a widow, who did a steady respectable trade with a connection; she never stooped to exhibit those startling gew-

gaws, all feathers, flowers, and tinsel, which serve to excite the envy of some customers, and the horror of others; every bonnet in her window was comparatively quiet, of good materials, of good price, and rather large; a few of the cheaper ones were always marked, but the majority bore no indication of price, and ladies were charged for them according to what they expected to pay, or with regard to their dress and manner; their social status, when known, made an appreciable difference in price. Mrs. Frumpton knew her customers thoroughly, her class of article would have no more suited Miss Chepning's connection, than Miss Chepning's article would have suited Mrs. Frumpton's ladies; so they carried on their respective businesses separated from each other by a very short distance, without the slightest feeling of envy or competition.

Mrs. Frumpton was about fifty-five years old, not of a particularly harsh or severe disposition, but by no means quick

to appreciate or remedy the small sufferings and inconveniences of her assistants and apprentices; regarding them in somewhat the same light as she would have regarded the horses to her carriage, had she kept one, as something not to be cruelly lashed or jerked at, but as never-to-be-expected-to-fail machines, which must drag her to Kew or Richmond and back, if only she wanted to go, however much their shoes might pinch.

When one of her young ladies, working on mourning, complained that the excessive jumping of the gas damaged her eyesight, she pooh-poohed the idea, but nevertheless she considerately put the question to the other eleven as to whether the gas was sufficiently eccentric in its movements to cause them any serious inconvenience; and, holding their mistress in special awe, they had all—naturally enough—replied in the negative, thereby dooming their companion to a three months' absence from her means of livelihood. But still, it could hardly be expected that Mrs. Frump-

ton should go to the expense of temporarily retaining the services of a gasfitter, merely because the constitution of one of her young ladies happened to be exceptionally weak.

Or if in the sultry summer months the drains smelt unusually foetid in the thirteen feet by eleven work-room behind the shop, it certainly was not worth while to go to the trouble and mess, and, above all, the expense of having them made to act properly, especially as Mrs. Frumpton always sat in the shop, where the smell was hardly noticeable, and the young ladies only breathed the bad air during the few hours between nine in the morning and eight in the evening, except in case of a great press of work, when they might have to stay there an hour or two longer. All the old hands looked more or less pale, pasty, and listless; but then milliners always do. It was not to be expected that they could revel in a light, lady-like employment, combined with the advantages of even reasonably unpolluted air, because,

the atmosphere contained in a room thirteen feet by eleven, occupied for eleven or twelve hours, by twelve human beings, would naturally stink, without any adventitious aid from drains. Existence on this planet—and on others—is made up of consolations and compensations. Mrs. Frumpton's workpeople experienced the full enjoyment of being better off than many of their fellow creatures. Their time—at least a good deal of it—was occupied by a genteel employment, which, however much it might overtask their eyes, left their arms and legs quite unstrained. As a counterpoise, they worked in a small, close room, tenanted by drain effluvia, but still infinitely superior to the black hole at Calcutta. During the daytime the light was all that could be desired; the ceiling of the room consisted mainly of skylight, which somewhat helped to air the place in winter, while in summer the vertical rays of the hottest sun hardly served to make it as sultry as the tropical glass-house in Kew Gardens, to which

some of the young ladies likened it. A blind had once been suggested, but Mrs. Frumpton thought it quite unnecessary, and she was no doubt right. When people choose a means of living, they accept the advantages and disadvantages adherent to it. One or two of the more public spirited proposed a small subscription for the purpose of defraying the expense of the much-desired blind, but the others considered their tenure of office too uncertain to warrant the outlay, of which, perhaps, an ungrateful posterity would reap nearly all the benefit. What had posterity done for them? So, summer after summer they went on, being forced, like weak hyacinths in a hot-house, to which too much heat has been applied; sometimes they drooped a little, but they were more easily revived by the aid of a bottle of smelling-salts, or a cup of weak tea, than plants are by the application of water. The human vegetable probably suffered the more pain under the two processes of half-suspended animation and

slow recovery ; but who can tell what may be the amount of feeling experienced by a delicate flower, fainting with excessive heat, and craving for a few drops of water to moisten its parched pores ?

On a sultry July morning,—succeeding a day so hot as to cause horses to fall dead in the streets, and their shoes to almost frizzle their hoofs, as they wearily shuffled along over the hot stones—exactly as the church clock of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate, struck nine, Miss Goldring, Mrs. Frumpton’s “first hand,” entered the workroom, as she had entered it week in, and week out, for the last fifteen years, with the exception of ten days’ or a fortnight’s holiday in each year. She was rather above the middle height of woman—slim, genteel-looking, and pale, with hair of a brown so light that it gave the idea of containing barely sufficient pigment to keep up the colour ; her eyes were of a pale grey ; her cheeks were rather sunken ; and, although she could not be said to look really ill, she had that appearance of being in weak

health so often seen in people who have passed long days and years in sedentary employment, or in unwholesome workshops. When the light caught her at a disadvantage, her features had a worn, wan, shrunk look, and you might have taken her for seven-and-thirty—her real age; but when her face lit up with its particularly pleasant smile, she would have been guessed at quite ten years younger.

Nearly all the young ladies were assembled when she entered. Giving them good morning, she proceeded to take off her bonnet and rather glazy, but fashionably made and trimmed, black silk jacket.

Miss Nicker the second in command, was a fair, fat faced young woman, of not more than six and twenty, who would have been pretty had she been less doughy looking, with more animation of expression.

“Goldy dear,” she said to the forewoman, “Mrs. Frumpton’s gone to the West, to buy trimming, and she says

you're to keep us very quiet, and industrious till she comes back."

"Oh! well you must all be very industrious and then you may talk a little," replied Miss Goldring, the words seemed to be all spoken in one breath, in a weak, subdued tone, suggesting that the speaker had on first taking the situation modulated her voice to the pitch which she thought would be most persuasive to customers, and that she had at length lost the power of giving it greater volume.

"I don't think the drains are quite so bad this morning," said Miss Nicker, holding out at arm's length an elegant, partly made black and pink bonnet, in order to obtain an exhaustive view of its profile.

"Wait till the afternoon, when we've been in the room some hours, with the glare of the sun on it," put in Miss Lentle a pretty but listless-looking dark girl, chucking a maraboo feather—as it were under the chin—to make it fall more gracefully.

"Oh! crimini! didn't it smell yesterday afternoon; standing over a street sewer trap's a fool to it," laughed Miss Mudcaster a little undersized fledgling, of rather less social status than the rest, her mother keeping a very small shop for the sale of cow heels, liver, ox cheek, cat's meat, and the lower sorts of tripe.

"Hush! Miss Mudcaster," protested the "first hand," in her most modulated and deliberate silvery tones, "you wouldn't talk like that if Mrs. Frumpton happened to be here."

"I only wish old mother Frump had to sit here all day in the broiling sun, and smell it, that's all the harm I wish her, and for two pins I'd tell her so," persisted the irrespressible Mudcaster.

"Well it doesn't affect me," said a quiet-looking girl named Smelt, who had just taken her seat, and a bonnet shape in the very first stage of decoration.

"No, of course not, because you've got no nose," retorted Miss Mudcaster.

"Yes, I have got a nose, Miss, if it

doesn't turn up quite so much as some people's," returned Miss Smelt, with the most scathing sarcasm that could be infused into the words.

"I'm sure my nose doesn't turn up, does it Miss Nicker?" asked the small girl colouring.

"No one said it did," said Miss Smelt pleasantly, well satisfied at the effect of her shaft, "those that the cap fits let them wear it."

"It doesn't fit me I know."

"Well then don't wear it, my dear."

"Now young ladies, no quarrelling please," interposed Miss Goldring.

"Well you haven't got any smell if you've got a nose," continued Mudcaster the indomitable.

"A good job too, when there's drains about," returned Miss Smelt; "none of you helped me about the gas when it made my eyes bad for three months, so I'm sure I shan't trouble myself about the drains."

"Smelt won't ever forget the gas, I

think,” said Miss Lentle without looking up from her work.

“Nor more would you if you’d lost three months through it; but no, you couldn’t open your mouths, when Mrs. Frumpton asked you if you found the jumping hurt your eyesight, you were all afraid of her like a parcel of ninnies; it was, ‘Oh no, mum, I don’t feel it,’ and ‘I don’t notice it,’ and ‘It doesn’t make the least difference to me, mum; I can see very well indeed.’ Of course if the rest could see I could, and so it was allowed to go on, if you’re all of one mind about the drains, why don’t you write to the churchwardens, or the relieving officer, or the overseers, or whoever it is, I don’t know, but no, you’re all afraid of her,” and the speaker here luckily finished all she had to say, for she could not have continued much longer at the same rate of speed.

“Oh! I shouldn’t like to do that,” said Miss Nicker in a tone of pious horror.

“No because you’re afraid, like you were about the gas,” said Miss Smelt with a sneer.

"I don't think it would be quite the thing," said Miss Goldring mildly.

"Why not?" asked little Miss Mudcaster; "shouldn't I like to see old mother Frump's face, if the men came in and said 'We've got orders to take up your shop and put the drains to rights,' wouldn't it be a lark? I'd give a week's money to see her."

"Well why don't you write then, Muddy?" asked Miss Lentle, slyly.

"Oh! yes, catch me at it, you don't think I'm going to do it alone, if I got the sack my mother would wallop me, and turn me out perhaps, into the bargain. I don't mind doing it if all the rest will."

There being no acceptance of this challenge Miss Smelt said with much scorn, "No fear; they've had the smell so long that they begin to like it, and wouldn't lose it on any account, no doubt it's very healthy."

"Smelt's very disagreeable, I think she must have got out of bed the wrong side this morning," suggested Miss Lentle,

“or perhaps she didn’t see her young man last Sunday.”

“At all events I wouldn’t be seen with such a fellow as you go out with, trousers of a large zigzag pattern that reminds you of thunder and lightning, a blue coat with a velvet collar, fastened in so tight at the waist, that you’d think he wore stays, a hat cocked on one side, and his hair curled; shouldn’t I like to see him with it in papers? a green tie, and lavender kids of course.”

“Smelt’s jealous because her young man doesn’t wear lavender kids, I wouldn’t go out with a fellow that didn’t wear lavender kids,” said Miss Lentle, with the most perfect good nature, without looking up from the careful adjustment of a blue convolvulus.

“Jealous of a thing like that!” said Miss Smelt, with a contemptuous laugh, as though the idea was quite too ridiculous.

“Never mind Smelt don’t be cross, you shall have him when I’ve done with him. But where’s little Lyddy? she’s very late.”

"Twenty minutes past nine," said Miss Goldring, referring to a very diminutive gold watch at her waist, "it's lucky Mrs. Frumpton isn't here, wouldn't she give it to her?"

Before the forewoman could tuck the small watch into its tight pocket, Lydia Dumlin entered hurriedly, and went straight over to the corner where she always took off her bonnet and cape, without speaking a word, and without even looking at any one, so differently from her usual light airy laughing way of coming into the room, that every one looked up. It seemed difficult to believe this to be the same sprightly joyous girl, the life and soul of the room from whom they had parted only the night before. She folded up her out-door dress, placed her bonnet on the top of the little heap, took her seat in silence, and began stitching away quickly at a bandeau of black velvet, which she took off the table.

"You're late, Lyddy," said Miss Goldring, gently.

"Yes, I am late. Where's Mrs. Frump-ton?" said Lydia, without looking up.

"She's gone to the west for trim-mings," replied Miss Goldring.

"Oh!" said Lydia.

"Why, Lyddy, what's the matter with you?" asked Miss Lentle, "here's Smelt got out of bed the wrong side, and you're as glum as a boiled owl; why, you've got a face like a penny kite!"

"I don't feel very well," said Lydia, quietly.

"Ah! that's always the way with the very gay ones, when they're down, they are down and no mistake," observed Miss Mudcaster.

"Who said I was down?" asked Lydia, looking up for an instant.

"Well it seems like it," replied Miss Mudcaster. "Where did he take you to last night? Did'nt he treat you?"

"If you'll have the goodness to mind your own business Miss Mudcaster I shall feel obliged," said Lydia, with polite severity.

“ Oh ! very well, Miss Dumlin, I can do that without the least difficulty. Oh, dear yes, I can do that,” and the peppery Miss Mudcaster accordingly continued to mind her own business in silence for the rest of the morning.

The absence of Mrs. Frumpton was not turned to the best advantage by the other young ladies; they did not indulge in the “good talk” which they had promised themselves. Lydia’s low spirits seemed to have thrown a damp over the whole room, from Miss Goldring down to little Miss Chaffinch, the smallest and youngest of them all, so that everyone was glad when one o’clock came round; when those who were lucky enough to live near went home to their dinners, and the unfortunates, who lived at a distance, produced from their reticules, paper parcels, containing bread and cheese, or hard boiled eggs, or bread and cold meat; all of which had a pleasant flavour of the brown paper or newspaper in which they happened to have been wrapped.

Of course, nothing could be cooked, either in the work-room or in the kitchen, so that those who lived at a distance of even twenty minutes' walk from the shop preferred to go home to dinner. It was sharp work—especially if the meal did not happen to be quite ready when they arrived—twenty minutes' walk each way, and twenty minutes for feeding, but it was preferable to continual cold victuals, with a taste of printing ink; even when they could be washed down with that delicious compound of sugar-and-water, which, by a conventional euphemism, is termed “fourpenny ale.” It was not always that the servant could spare time to fetch this luxury, but there was a tolerably efficient substitute to be had, without going out of the house, in the shape of water from a cistern, which kept the water beautifully warm in summer-time, on account of its being placed just under the slates of a wash-house, with a nice southern aspect.

CHAPTER III.

NOT TO BE OVERCOME.

AT the Dumlin coffee-house, in the purlieus of Spitalfields market, the dirty faced clock in the public room pointed to a quarter to one p.m. Not that it professed to be absolutely accurate by Greenwich mean time ; it was within five or ten minutes, one way or the other, and that was quite near enough for the general run of customers. A magnificent sirloin of beef, weighing between twelve and fourteen pounds, hung at the fire of the combined kitchen and parlour, turning slowly round on the spit with a dreamy click, as though its revolving labours were nearly over.

The temperature outside was about eighty in the shade ; the coffee-house stood on the sunny side of the way, so

that the kitchen and family dining-room, by the aid of a large fire, had managed to acquire a very respectable temperature.

Mrs. Dumlin, who appeared rather perturbed and irritable, hurried about the room with her elbows well squared, ready for action, and basted the meat during the intervals of serving customers. Susan, her married daughter, walked about rattling the money in her large lap-pocket, looking after the customers and taking their coin, occasionally giving an eye to her infant son, little Bob, whose conscious and unconscious powers of doing mischief seemed practically unlimited. He was nicely dressed in a red frock, partially protected by a holland pinafore, ornamented with serpentine patterns of white braid. The betting appeared to be greatly in favour of his spoiling either himself or his clothes, before the dinner could be served. One minute, his mother had to extricate him from an intricate gymnastic performance on the meat screen, which threatened to topple over

with its nearly perfected joint; the next time she looked round he was swinging himself on the tap of the large coffee steamer, which luckily for him had been just filled up, so that his weight was not quite sufficient to overcome its resistance. Her correction, consisted in saying, in the most persuasive tones, "You mustn't do that, ducky."

To which the ducky several times replied in a sepulchral kind of howl, "I want my dinner—where's my dinner?"

"All right, ducky, you shall have your dinner in a minute or two," said his mother, with a nod and a grin which although meant to be seductive, had the effect of rendering her face like a mask in a pantomime.

Perhaps the child thought so, and was frightened, for he rammed one forefinger knuckle into each eye socket, and bellowed "Want something to eat."

"Here you are cocky," said his mother, cutting a slice of bread from the loaf and giving it to him, "there, stop your mouth with that."

The child took the bread and began to nibble it, apparently without approving much of its flavour.

Mrs. Dumlin still bustling about like the active hardworking woman she is, at length gives vent to a remark which she has somewhat similarly enunciated more than once or twice that morning:

"I tell you I don't like it Sue, she didn't ought to do it, it don't look well, it don't," and on uttering the last words she suddenly came to a standstill with a fist resting on each hip.

"Oh, lor there, bless your soul, she won't come to no harm, don't you go and worry your old strings about *her*, she's right enough," said Susan with a grin and a snigger, intended to be reassuring, "she's been stopping with that Crump gal, I should say, oh lor there, wake up, she's right enough."

"Well, I don't like it, and I shall tell her so," said Mrs. Dumlin, and taking a fist off one hip, she raised it and brought it down again with great emphasis.

Just at this moment Ephraim, the youngest son, came through the coffee room with a heavy slouching step, into the parlour; his actual age was about twenty, but if anyone had been told that he was forty they would not have detected any improbability in the statement. He looked inside the meat screen, and then rubbing his hands together chuckled and grinned till he looked something like the laughing hyæna at feeding time.

"Isn't dinner ready?" he asked, still grinning and rubbing his hands together.

"Yes, in a minute, as soon as your father comes in," replied Mrs. Dumlin, "you ain't seen anything of your sister Lyddy I suppose?—but there, in course you ain't."

"No I ain't seen nothing of her; what's the matter with her?" asked Ephraim.

"Why she ain't been home all night, that's what's the matter with her, and I don't like it."

"Oh! she's all right, old gal, she ain't no fool, ain't Lyddy," said Ephraim, looking again into the meat screen, "she's

stopped at Nelly Crump's house, as likely as not."

"Well I don't like it, she's no business to do it, and I shall tell her so, when she comes in," said Mrs. Dumlin with a determined shake of the head.

"Don't flurry yourself old gal, she'll turn up all right to her dinner, I want mine I can tell you."

"Well then wait till your father comes in."

"Oh! blow the old man, it won't make no difference to him, I ain't a going to eat it all, let me cut a bit off and then shove it down to the fire again," said Ephraim querulously.

"Oh! there, go on then, don't bother me, I never see such a lot," said Mrs. Dumlin, rushing away to serve a customer.

Ephraim gave his mother no chance of revoking her permission. Snatching a knife from the table, he hacked away at the joint as it hung at the fire, and soon succeeded in transferring the greater part of the undercut to his plate, eyeing it,

chuckling, grinning, and breathing over it—while he helped himself to pepper, salt, and mustard—more than ever like the laughing hyæna at the Zoological Gardens, when he has actually been allowed to finger his lump of flesh; and in point of fact, viewed apart from the childish assertion that every other animal is specially created for the use of our lordly selves, an ox-eating man feeding off sirloin, does not compare favourably with an antelope-eating hyæna enjoying the only diet which comes natural to him.

Ephrain had only just fallen to, when Harry and James entered, with their brother-in-law, Dick Blacklock, Susan's husband, a fresh-coloured, well-favoured, but rather dissipated-looking young man, about seven years younger than his wife, whom he was nevertheless capable of chastising with great severity when anything went wrong. She was a woman of peculiar temperament, and seemed to detect a sort of grim humour in the situation, when her husband blacked her eye, or split her ear; she

never complained or made any outcry on these occasions, contenting herself with merely giggling—often on one side of her mouth only—and saying “O don’t Dick.” But Mr. Blacklock had little or no appreciation for all this amiability of temper. In the space of two years he had managed to eject himself from a good baker’s business near at hand, by dint of drinking, betting and other polite vices; and he now contributed nothing to his wife’s support; nevertheless, perhaps owing to a community of ideas and language, he was always welcome at Dumlin’s table, where he not unfrequently condescended to present himself about dinner time.

“Well, Eph, what’s the old gal got for dinner to-day?” asked Mr. Blacklock, with his hands in his trousers’ pockets, bending down to analyse the contents of his brother-in-law’s plate. “Well, I’m blowed! you don’t know which is the best part, you don’t; you ain’t got much of the undercut, oh, no!

I say, old gal, you shouldn't let him go and cart away all the prime; no, blow me, that's too bad."

"There, get out o' my way do," said Mrs. Dumlin, persuading the impediments with her sturdy elbows; "Eph wanted his dinner in a hurry,—he couldn't wait."

"Nor more can't I wait," said Harry and James strictly in unison.

"My goodness gracious! look at that boy," said Mrs. Dumlin suddenly, pointing at her grandson, little Bob, who had managed unobserved to soak his slice of bread so thoroughly in the dripping pan, that the liquid grease was trickling from it down his arms, and off his elbows on to the handsome frock and embroidered pinafore.

"Oh, my Lord!" said Harry and James.

His father inflicting two ordinary maledictions on the offender's youthful head, administered to it such a sounding cuff that the child went sprawling on to the

dripping-pan, and upset its contents about the floor. His mother ran and picked him up, bellowing, out of the greasy pool, and rubbed his frock with her pocket-handkerchief, with which she afterwards proceeded to wipe the perspiration from her face. "There, don't cry, ducky," she said, her face glistening with good nature and beef dripping.

Sitting down coolly at the table, Mr. Blacklock observed, "I shall kill that child some day, I know I shall," in a manner which seemed to say the act would not only be pardonable but almost meritorious.

"He *is* a blessed kid, and no mistake," remarked Harry ironically; "why don't you tie him up somewhere, Susan?"

Taking no notice of her brother's remark, Susan gave the finishing touch to little Bob's frock, and placed him on his low wooden stool; "there, cocky, you're all right now," she said, as she rose up, and shuffled away to look after the reckonings.

“I say, old gal, how about this bit o’ dinner we was a-talking about?” said Harry to his mother, who had just entered from the coffee-room.

“Oh, there, don’t bother me,” replied Mrs. Dumlin, with the air of a woman who had made her protest, and could not be expected to do anything further in the matter,—“I never see such a lot; there, take and cut it if you can’t wait; don’t leave any for your father; eat it all up, bone and all, that’s what I’d do.”

“There, don’t cut up rusty, old gal,” said James, “there’ll be plenty left for the old man;” and the two brothers, with Mr. Blacklock, proceeded all together to slice pieces off the joint, as it hung at the fire, with such vigour that it seemed a wonder no fingers or thumbs were served up in the gravy.

They had no sooner commenced eating, than Mr. Dumlin, senior, entered, with his long leather apron girt tightly round his short waist, bent as usual on making

his bald head counterbalance the weight of his corporation.

"Oh, my lor, here's the old man," chuckled James over his meat.

"Come on Willum," said Harry, "here's plenty left for you."

Mr. Dumlin sat down to the table without taking off his apron, and waited patiently till his wife served up the joint, then he grinned over it—much as his three sons had done—without making any remark on its hacked and unsightly condition; in fact he had become used to it, like eels to skinning. By this time Ephraim having finished his dinner, rose from the table, and went towards the dresser drawer, in which large relays of copper change were kept. Opening the drawer he stuffed a handful of the coins into the side pocket of his cutaway coat, and was in the act of making a further raid when Mr. Dumlin, senior, bawled out with his mouthful, "Now then drop that you Eph; you're always at that game."

"Oh! bless my eyes, ain't I to have a

mouldy copper or two to spend Willum?" asked Ephraim, querulously, as he completed the deposit of the second handful of money in his pocket.

"There shut the drawer and get out with you," said Mr. Dumlin, flourishing his knife, "and don't you come any more of it."

Ephraim slouched out through the public room, and met his sister Lydia just coming in, "Hulloa Lyddy, so you've turned up have you?"

"Off again Eph? you're early to day." Ephraim was hardly a sufficiently close observer to notice it, or he might have seen that Lydia's usually bright elastic spirits were not up to their usual pitch by at least a tone or two.

She had a spotted black net fall over her face, but the carriage of her head, or even her walk, would have struck anyone but her brother, he merely made a remark about the Tartarian nature of the heat, and slouched round the corner to his work.

Lydia walked through the coffee room

attracting the gaze of all the customers ; no sooner had she set foot in the parlour than Mrs. Dumlin said with a start, " Lor child ! wherever have you been ? I've been in a pretty state about you."

Taking off her bonnet with her face turned away from all of them, Lydia replied in a low tone " I've been with Nelly Crump, mother." Then she sat down, and waited to be helped, without looking at any one.

" Well you shouldn't do it gal, I won't have it, mind that ; you never said you were going to stay out all night, it makes one anxious like, you know," said Mrs. Dumlin, handing Lydia her dinner.

" She pressed me to stay mother," said Lydia, taking up her knife and fork, and looking on her plate.

" Well you mustn't do it again mind," said the easily pacified Mrs. Dumlin.

" Why, Lyddy, gal, you don't seem sprack, you ain't well perhaps," said Mr. Dumlin, pushing away his plate and leaning back in his Windsor chair.

"Pretty well, thank you, father," said Lydia, eating languidly.

"Don't worry her, Willum," said Harry to his parent, in a tone of fatherly reproof; "she was up late last night I suppose, weren't you Lyd?"

"Rather," replied Lydia.

"Why bless my soul, child! you're as dull as an alderman at a city dinner," said Mrs. Dumlin.

"Yes, and she's off her feed too, I'm blowed if she ain't," remarked Harry.

"Ain't you well, gal?" asked Mrs. Dumlin, kindly.

Lydia put down her knife and fork, and burst into tears.

"She ain't well I think, old woman," said Mr. Dumlin, "she'd better go up stairs and lie down; let one of the boys go round to Mrs. Frumpton's, and say that his sister's took ill, and won't be able to come again to-day."

"Perhaps she sat up too late last night," suggested Mr. Blacklock, raising his heavy head from off his hand

for the first time since he had finished eating.

"I should say it's more likely the heat of that blessed awful workroom," said James; "with its cussed skylight, without a bit of blind to it, and I shall tell mother Frump if I go round."

"Do nothing of the kind, boy," said Mrs. Dumlin, decisively.

"Ah! but I will though," said James shaking his shock of dusty hair in the most determined manner.

"Well, then, you shan't go, so that's soon settled; Harry'll go, won't you Harry?"

"Yes I'll go," replied Harry, surlily. "I should like to fetch her a smack o' the mouth, that's what I should uncommon well like to do."

"There get along with you do, and don't talk nonsense," said Mrs. Dumlin.

Lydia went up stairs to her own room without even looking at any of them, and the two brothers with Mr. Blacklock walked heavily out of the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHIMPAINTERS.

TWENTY years ago fewer people lived at Thamwell, and society was naturally more exclusive than it is now. The City men who lived there—although perhaps not quite so rich as Crœsus—were all painfully respectable; they not only never failed in business themselves, but they wondered how other people could be so silly or so criminal as to do so. Of course the failure of a Thamwellite was not an event which had never actually occurred, but when such a downfall did happen, it would generally be for a highly creditable amount, although the dividend was not always equally reputable. Then the patriarchs of the place, going up to town together in first-class compartments, would

solemnly shake their heads together, and say they knew more than a month ago what would happen ; in fact, one of them had “ told Smirker, after I sold mine, that he’d get in a mess if he held his tallow—such nasty stuff if you overstay your market. If he’d taken my advice . . . I’m sorry for him—good fellow, Smirker ; should like to buy some of his old port ! ”

But of course, Smirker was obliged to leave a place in which it was impossible for a man to reside who had ever paid less than twenty shillings in the pound.

The Chimpainters were not rich, but they were highly respectable and well connected : they lived in the pretty white house on the hill. Mr. Chimpainter had never been in business, and his wife rather prided herself on that fact. Her age was fifty or thereabouts, and she came of a highly respectable family of Sunderland ship-owners ; she never asserted her importance, but made it felt by an air of intense repose, which no one had ever been able to ruffle. Even her lady friends

tacitly acknowledged her superiority, although they would have been unable to explain in what it consisted; it was simply one of those undisputed axioms which people did not attempt to deny. The fact that Mr. Chimpainter hardly ever went up to town, while most of the well-to-do inhabitants of Thamwell were obliged to go regularly at a certain time every morning, might have had something to do with Mrs. Chimpainter's sovereignty. Radically differing from your neighbours in any important function, makes you either their superior or their inferior, only with these premises, the two parties might arrive at quite opposite conclusions; but in the present instance there was a tolerable unanimity of opinion, which three things combined in producing, viz., Mrs. Chimpainter's dignified repose of manner, her husband's absolute freedom from the slightest taint of trade, and the mediocre mental qualities of her neighbours.

Mr. Chimpainter was a gentleman *sui*

generis, about sixty years old, with a much wrinkled and rather high forehead. Bald-headed, broad-faced, long bearded, with firmly closed thin lips, the upper one shaved; sitting on the stump of a tree, clothed in a hairy skin, instead of in the regular human garments, he might have been mistaken for a philosophic gorilla.

He lived among his books, without being an ordinary bookworm; he liked fresh air and exercise as well as anyone, and twice a day he took a brisk constitutional to clear the morbid cobwebs out of his spacious brain-pan. He took a grim delight in crushing the universal conceit of mankind; his later writings consisted mostly of short pithy pamphlets, which pleased a small section of the community, and scandalised the remainder; he altogether ignored the troublesome and laborious process of tracing man step by step from the monad to his present eminence. He took it for granted that for some thousands of years the sufficiently educated must have known their

humble origin; he then proceeded to ridicule some of man's not always recognised absurdities, such as the abolition of compulsory black labour, while the horse—an animal almost as intelligent as the raw negro—is still unemancipated.

As an instance of ineradicable human conceit, he called special attention to the fact, that although man has always more or less punished the murder of his own species, he is utterly careless of the lives of his fellow animals, and slaughters thousands of them every day, merely because he happens to like them as food.

Mr. Chimpainter further owned to a strong sense of humiliation whenever he sat down to a dish of fish, flesh, or fowl: often he threatened to go into parliament merely for the humour of bringing in a bill to make the slaying of harmless animals rank as murder. He pictured to himself the pathetic speeches of honourable members with the fear of being deprived of their salmon cutlet, haunch of mutton, and roast grouse; the speechless

fury of the men who could kill seven or eight hundred birds in a day, and the pious horror of the bishops, at the bare idea of not accounting a man's diet as of more value than the lives of many sparrows, or oxen.

Priests as a body he held in great contempt, but he was on very friendly terms with the Rev. Josiah Jorkin, rector of Thamwell, a strong minded tolerant man, who took a business-like view of his profession. There had been a living in his family, and he thought that while people were weak-minded enough to pay a clergy, the salary might just as well fall into his pocket as into any one else's.

Mr. Chimpainter often joked the rector about the inconsistencies and absurdities of his office, who took it all in good part; but he thought the philosopher went rather too far when he said one day at dinner, that beasts before being slaughtered ought to receive priestly consolation.

"I really think that remark is in bad taste you know," said the rector, "inde-

pendently of any strong religious feeling in the matter."

"I didn't intend it to be so," replied Mr. Chimpainter, "but I'm a very humble man, and I think that if I require the attendance of a priest shortly before death, so does a South Down; I merely have an accidental advantage over the lower animal in point of ancestry."

The rector asked some one to take wine with him, he knew that what were supposed to be his first principles would not stand the rude test of rationalism, moreover he never allowed himself to get entangled in a religious argument, and at dinner time he held it to be in especially bad taste.

Mrs. Chimpainter of course went to Church like a woman, and a good Christian as she was. In the old parish church she had a large square, curtained pew where she sat in solemn state with her only son. For the first ten years of her married life she had many quarrels with her husband, about his non-attendance at divine worship, but he so staunchly ad-

hered to his statement, that he had such a vast quantity of time to make up for the hours wasted in church-going in his youth, that it finally became a subject on which they agreed to differ.

Herbert Chimpainter was a straight-haired, dark youth, with a thin, straight nose, and a chin not projecting much, but hardly to be surpassed in sharpness. He had been intended by his mother for the Church, but having imbibed some of his father's opinions, he was too honest to take pay for propagating dogmas which he considered useless, so he gave up all ideas of the priesthood much to his mother's chagrin, and elected mercantile business as a substitute.

The connection of Mrs. Chimpainter's family with the shipping interest, served to place Herbert in the office of Messrs. Chilikier, Goldripp, & Wellup, of Leadenhall Street, one of the largest and most respectable firms of ship owners, and ship brokers in England. A clerkship in this old-fashioned house meant an establishment for

life, and looked at solely from a monetary point of view, it was preferable to many a piece of church preferment. Most of the clerks were bald-headed patriarchs, nearly as old as Mr. Goldripp, the sole surviving partner; a principal who never made it his study to buy labour in the cheapest market. If a clerk came to him as a mere lad, and did his duty, he was sure of being retained in the service at a liberally increasing salary.

Herbert Chimpainter entered the office at a peculiarly lucky time, when he was only seventeen, and at the age of one-and-twenty he was receiving a stipend about equal to that of two curates, and yet the amount of work he managed to get through in the course of a day was by no means excessive, for being the particular friend and companion of Percy Goldripp—the chief's only son—he was to a certain extent looked upon as a privileged individual. If he happened to be rather late in arriving at the office in the morning, or if he took two hours instead

of one for his dinner, no one made any remark.

The business was not entirely to his taste, that is to say, he had no keen zest for it, such as a painter has for his profession. Many mercantile men seem to regard their occupation with fond affection, as something to be enjoyed for itself, and not merely as a means to an end. Herbert had none of this feeling. At the age of seventeen he was a mere child in knowledge of the world; partly, perhaps, from having no brothers or sisters, and from having been kept much at home; and, in addition, he was not naturally precocious, so that he could hardly have been said to have chosen his calling. It had been suggested to him, and he had acquiesced.

He seemed to have inherited some of his father's book-love, but in a rather different form: the latter cared only for writings which tended to bear out his favourite theory of the development of man from the monad, and hence from spontaneous generation; or for such general

literature as possessed intrinsic merits of its own, whether in the form of an essay, a novel, or a play. The son had been too precocious in his reading. At eighteen he had exhausted modern writers; contemporary novels he looked down on with contempt; generalising with the hasty rashness of youth—classing the good and bad together—he was unable to see that while some were less healthy than the “Newgate Calendar,” and less entertaining than “Jack the Giant-Killer,” others were more improving than a volume of sermons, minus their dulness and turgid illogicality. Living at a distance of twelve miles from London, he seldom went to the theatre, because of the painful loss of sleeping-time which it involved; occasionally he saw a piece—more often bad than good—which led him to the conclusion that a good modern play must be an impossibility.

Having completely worked out modern books, there was fortunately open to him a bulky vein of reading in the deep mines

of ancient literature. To unearth this treasure at any of the circulating libraries was, of course, out of the question; he must buy it wherever and whenever he could meet with it. He began by delving in the dirty trays of bookstalls, but he soon discovered that the days when anything rare or valuable was likely to be picked up at these dingy marts, had long since passed away, so he attended sales, and gradually learnt values. Sometimes he bought a lot in which there chanced to be one volume which he sold at such a price as to bring the cost of the others down to a few pence—their real value—but as long as they were of respectable age—say not less than eighty to one hundred years—they were highly esteemed. If they happened to contain engravings, their value was largely increased. It mattered little that they were decidedly inferior to book illustrations at the present day; they were old, and that sufficed. Like paintings, they were not valued for their beauty, but on account of

the fame of the artist, and because of their antiquity. A third-rate modern painting may be infinitely more beautiful than the dirty and almost invisible one which hangs beside it; yet, if the connoisseur can by peering through the grime discover the signature of an old master, he will purchase the latter at several thousand times the price of the former, notwithstanding that no amount of cleaning will ever make it more than a blurred mass of comparatively colourless light and shade. Although, as a rule, everything improves, it is quite possible that a long time ago some men painted better than some men paint now, but the nature of the materials used renders it impossible to decide the point. With sculpture the case is different: the marble remains undecayed to speak for itself. Neither men, nor their capability of producing works of art, have altered greatly in the short space of time which has elapsed since Phidias died; and it is not at all extraordinary if he has excelled all his successors.

But Herbert—with youth's want of discrimination—almost went to the extent of taking *omne antiquum pro magnifico*. If he picked up a book of seventeenth or eighteenth century plays,—however dull they might be, he read them through religiously. It never occurred to him that, at least, in point of construction, if in nothing else, ancient playwrights, from Aristophanes up to Beaumont and Fletcher, are left far in the rear by those of the present day. Shakspeare was doubtless a writer of transcendent genius, but his plays are much more satisfactory in the chamber than on the stage. Sheridan lived only yesterday, but, good as are his comedies, the appreciation of them has certainly not decreased since their author ceased to exist.

Herbert soon became more of a book-worm than his father, and the appetite for acquiring books seemed to grow in collecting them. The choice and valuable volumes he took home with him on the evening of their purchase, but the rank-and-file, much to the annoyance of his

fellow-clerks, were allowed to lie about in piles, lumbering up the office. It was to no purpose that Percy Goldripp joked him most unmercifully about his cumbrous hobby, and tried to take him to the theatre and to other places of gay resort. Herbert was a recluse, and delighted more in the smell of an old author, than in all the sights and sensations of London and Paris put together. The work that he was really obliged to do at the office amounted to little more than that of one of those snug government sinecures, which are now, happily or unhappily, becoming so much rarer than they used to be in the good old times, and he was not unfrequently to be found looking over his treasures, under cover of his desk lid, during business hours.

Herbert's experience of the fair sex might be said to be almost *nil*. At the Royal Thamwell Grammar School, where his education was perfected, there had of course been the inevitable young ladies' seminary next door, with its windows

looking straight into the boys' playground, and although several of his schoolfellows had become hopelessly enslaved by the charms of diminutive girls to whom they had never spoken, nor were likely to speak, Herbert had managed to avoid sacrificing to Venus.

At Thamwell he had occasionally met girls of sufficient beauty. It is to be assumed that they did not appear to him in the light of his affinity, for he cultivated their acquaintance not at all.

Naturally a shy boy, he seemed to have no more idea of holding light converse with a lady than he would have had of chaffing an angel if the opportunity could have happened. Not that it therefore follows he considered the other sex angelic; it is much more probable that hitherto he had merely looked upon them as something different from himself, without feeling any of that inevitable magnetic or other power, which sooner or later attacks all males as with a madness, and which—like measles and whooping-cough

—becomes more troublesome as the age of the patient increases.

Every morning Herbert walked to Leadenhall street from the Shoreditch railway station, past Mrs. Frumpton's millinery establishment, without being especially struck by the beauty of the young lady who happened to be exposing the bonnets to the full glare of daylight, after their long night's repose in their dark drawers. This office was usually performed by Miss Goldring the forewoman, who although always looking genteel, and symmetrical, in her well-worn black silk dress, had nevertheless lost the youthful bloom of her pale and rather too delicately coloured beauty. It was not surprising, therefore, that a twenty-two year old hermit sage like Herbert Chim-painter should have scarcely noticed the fact of there being a milliner's at that particular spot, although it is tolerably certain that most young men of his age would have known the exact quality of physical excellence of every young lady in the shop.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

ONE balmy morning towards the end of August Lydia Dumlin happened to be standing in the window arranging the masterpieces of Mrs. Frumpton's manufactures, on their short and tall stands, in place of Miss Goldring, who had gone to the west end for the purpose of buying materials; but not without an eye to the possibility of carrying home in her mind the intricacies of some of the millinery *chef d'œuvres* exposed to view in the windows of Regent Street and elsewhere, an act of portorage not altogether easy, even to a professional.

Lydia was a beautiful fair girl of middle height, with more finely cut features than usually falls to the lot of blondes. Just as

Herbert passed, she was giving an artistic twist to a flower which had become slightly disarranged during the night, and as she held out the bonnet at half arm's length to fairly appraise its customer-drawing power, she looked so captivating that any one might have been struck with her, and Herbert took a long look at her in passing. She gave no sign of even having seen him, but she was an occasional tenant of his thoughts all that day, thoughts which had never before harboured a woman.

As he walked home that evening he peered into the shop in passing, and managed to just catch a glimpse of the charmer, stitching away as though her life depended on it.

On the following morning, as he passed, Lydia stood there in almost the same attitude; in fact, it would seem to be the one in which young ladies, arranging milliners' windows, are most frequently seen. Herbert looked at her as much as he cou'd without appearing rude, and

he fancied that she just glanced at him. With his black hair freshly cut and worn very short, with a small black moustache, and small whiskers shaved to just below the ear, he was one of those Mephistophelian-looking young men that fair women sometimes go mad about. Lydia had certainly noticed him; hundreds of good-looking youths and men passed the shop window while she stood there setting it out; most of them were attracted by her beauty; a few of them were bold enough to grin at her in the hope of getting a smile in return; but she went on with her occupation, as though they were quite out of her cognizance.

With Herbert it was different; he was always neatly dressed, wearing a good hat and good boots, and looking every inch a gentleman. To Lydia's eyes he differed from any one else in the daily procession, and imperceptibly she began to watch for his coming, acknowledging the weakness not even to herself. By

degrees Herbert used to look at her so pointedly, and with such evident admiration, that she sometimes, almost involuntarily, half smiled at him. He had never experienced anything half so fascinating; and Faust-like, only with more extenuating circumstances, he fell a victim to the first woman who had fairly caught his eye. All day, at the office, he thought only of the possibility of getting a sight at the siren when he should pass by in the evening; and if he happened to be then disappointed, he dreamt of her all night, and looked forward to seeing her in the morning. Even the oldest and dingiest books failed to fix his attention; and he felt less than ever inclined to accept Percy Goldripp's oft-repeated invitation to dine with him at a noted city restaurant, where the beauty of the barmaids exceeded even the *recherché* quality of the viands.

The difficulty of finding the opportunity for speaking to his enslaver seemed to Herbert almost insurmountable. He was

far too shy to adopt one of the ordinary barefaced means of obtaining an introduction, or rather of forcing his acquaintance on a lady; he could only wait and hope.

One beautiful autumn morning the train had brought Herbert to town nearly a quarter of an hour after time. Shore-ditch was crowded, as it always is between 9 A.M. and 9 P.M., with omnibuses, cabs, and heavy vehicles; the pavements literally swarmed with passengers, most of them with their noses pointed citywards, and utterly careless about walking on their right side of the footway. When the ardent lover, walking briskly along with the human stream, came within twenty yards of Mrs. Frumpton's shop, he saw Lydia standing at the door, cloaked and bonneted in the neatest but most ravishing style. He flattered himself that she was waiting to see him pass before starting on her journey; as soon as he had gone a few steps further she caught sight of him, and seemed to alter her determination. Jumping off the step

like a young fawn, and half looking behind her, she skipped along for three steps, thinking of anything but the chance of a collision with some other body in motion, and then she violently rebounded from a man carrying a heavy box of soap on his shoulders, and partly measured her length on the pavement. Two or three people stopped, and Herbert hurried forward to assist her; but she was on her feet again almost before he could touch her.

"I hope you're not hurt," he said gravely.

"Not in the least," she replied, laughing gaily and knocking the dust off her dress with her pocket handkerchief as she walked along.

"It was very clumsy of the man," said Herbert, "he ought to be——"

"No, not all, it was entirely my fault," said Lydia still laughing. "I ought to have been looking before me."

The soap-bearer finding that no great damage had been done, passed on with a

gruff apology, and the other people who had stopped went about their business.

"You're quite sure you're not hurt?" asked Herbert, anxious to say something, and unwilling to throw away the chance he had so long wished for.

"Oh! quite sure, thank you, I fell very comfortably," said Lydia, walking on as though nothing had happened.

Herbert walked along timidly beside her, as though he had peas in his shoes, not liking to leave her, and yet feeling that he was placing himself in a rather false position by staying; but then he thought of the long mute courtship he had gone through, and concluded that there must already be some slight mutual understanding between them; so he retained his position, and they progressed at a fair pace through Bishopsgate Street, and Threadneedle Street, up Cheapside, through St. Paul's Churchyard, talking on very ordinary topics, sentences being every now and then interrupted by people passing between them; for Herbert had

not as yet been able to muster courage enough to offer his arm; he managed however to effect this exploit before reaching Temple Bar, feeling when it was accepted somewhat as if the Queen had knighted him. To the libertine who has been chartered for a good many years, such a sentiment no doubt appears altogether absurd, but if he was ever modest—a virtue which seems to decline as civilization increases—let him try and remember his first love-making, if it is not too long ago.

On arriving at the shop in Regent Street where Lydia had to make her purchases it occurred to Herbert that he ought to have been at the office rather more than an hour since, so making an appointment for a meeting on the following evening, dazed with excitement, and parched with the unusual amount of talking, he hailed a Hansom and was driven swiftly to Leadenhall Street.

Existence seemed to have completely altered its aspect; the slow vegetation

with which he had so lately been content, was as unlike his present warm, quickly beating life, as the leaf of a musty old sixteenth century book is to a sheet of rose-tinted note paper; it was like the sudden emergence of a chrysalis from its dark case into sunshine. He trod the hard streets of the iron-hearted old City as though they had been paved with india-rubber. Even people on whom he merely called in the ordinary way of business, noticed the difference in him, so it was not surprising that Percy Goldripp—the only man whom he had ever really felt a liking for—should ask him whether he had ‘murdered a rich uncle or robbed a church;’ but Herbert Chimpainter was very far from being one of those who wore his heart on “his sleeve for daws to peck at.” He was reserved and uncommunicative to a fault, he would have received a confession of Percy’s love affairs with pleasure, and would have sympathised with him in all sincerity, but to give his own confidence in return, was a thing he

would have never even dreamt of; so he merely replied that he had not been so lucky as to effect either of the ends alluded to, but that the weather suited him so much better than the blazing heat, or the biting cold which alas! they must soon expect.

Nearly every evening Herbert waited in town till Lydia could leave her work, so that he might have the pleasure of taking a walk with her through some of the quietest streets of the, by that time, nearly deserted City. Lydia besides being ravishingly pretty, possessed, as before mentioned, that not to be simulated charm of intense animal spirits, which sometimes takes even an experienced man by storm, especially if he happen to be of a sombre disposition. She had not been to a hundred guinea finishing school, but having great natural ability she had managed so to utilise the advantages which had been afforded her by a good plain day school, that she could speak English correctly, with the exception of

occasional negligence in the use of the subjunctive mood—a point on which even the most expensively educated ladies sometimes founder. In fact schooling beyond a certain point appears to be altogether thrown away on girls ; if only they can speak their own language, they are fit to marry a duke, provided always that—for one generation at least—their birth and parentage shall be perfectly satisfactory.

So that in conversing with Lydia, Herbert encountered nothing which jarred against his highly sensitive ear, and after each interview he went home more completely captive than before.

Mrs. Chimpainter was a lady of most actively suspicious nature, so much so, indeed, that she sometimes smelt a rat where there was not even a mouse. Being dotingly fond of her only son, she observed the minutest shades of difference both in his appearance and in his spirits. The unprecedented frequency of his late arrivals from the city, combined with his

excitability and the flush on his face, served to convince her that there must be something unusual in the wind, and careful analysis of symptoms led her to the [conclusion that the something was a woman. To a young woman of the proper social status, chosen and approved by herself, she had no possible objection; in fact, as soon as Herbert had reached the by no means mature age of twenty-one, his marriage was the principal thing to which she looked forward in this life, only she naturally fell into the not unusual maternal error of fancying hardly any one she knew to be good enough for him. There was only one lady of her acquaintance to whom—if she had only been a few years younger—she would have cared to entrust him; but as she was, unfortunately, just twenty years his senior, the idea of this exceptionally desirable partner had to be abandoned.

But now there was clearly an aspirant for her son's hand whom Mrs. Chim-painter had not only not sanctioned, but

had not even seen, who might be some pert designing minx, who had never even possessed a grandfather; some creature with whom marriage would be impossible, but who might not be looked upon in this light by a youth entirely unguarded against feminine wiles. The anxious mother felt hot and cold by turns at the very thought of it; nevertheless, she was much too wary to make enquiries in a way which would defeat its own object. She jokingly invited his confidence one evening when he came home later than usual, alluding to his heightened colour, and opining that there must be some nice young lady in the case.

She might as well have invited the confidence of a hippopotamus. He made some not strictly correct explanation of his lateness, and buried himself in a black-letter volume. Mrs. Chimpainter put it to him in several ways; firstly, that he ought to tell her, because she would naturally be so pleased to hear of anything which gave her darling boy pleasure; secondly, be-

cause he himself would feel the happier for having given his confidence; and thirdly, because he ought not to keep anything of that kind from his parents; but neither of these points of view produced the desired effect.

CHAPTER VI.

A ROUGH AWAKENING.

TIME went on—at least a short time—and love did not grow colder. It seemed to have completely demoralised Herbert's working powers; even the driest old books failed to fix his attention; and in filling up several sets of bills of lading for a ship belonging to the firm named the "Venus," he inserted the "Lydia" instead; in fact he was happy only in the society of that pretty craft, compared with which all others seemed mere ugly old tubs. He had several times proposed delightful pleasure trips, which Lydia had been unable to accept without discharging herself from Mrs. Frumpton's establishment; but managing to obtain leave of absence one bright, sunshiny day, the

happy pair betook themselves to a bright little dinner at Richmond, overlooking the sparkling river, at its best, viz., at high-water, for it must be confessed that when the tide has ebbed for six or seven hours, Richmond looks about as slimy as other riverside places. As the evening wore on, racing-fours and eights, with an occasional sculler, shot past over the lifting water, taking their evening practice for some forthcoming match or regatta; and Lydia—unaccustomed to such scenes—clapped her hands with delight at the beautiful regularity of the quick, dipping oars. Even Herbert, the bookworm, could hardly conceal a mild interest in the “athletic lunatics,” as he styled them, nor repress a sort of half-formed desire to be slashing along in one of the boats, with that graceful swing which looks so easy to acquire; but he would have no more consented to undergo the long, necessary drilling, than he would have thought of burning his library. He had that unreasoning contempt for systematically

pursued athletics which is felt or simulated by some people who have never indulged in them, by reason of insufficient leisure, or defective constitutions, or want of pluck. At this early period of his existence it had never occurred to him that studious, sedentary men possess no mental qualities from which the athlete is excluded, and that those who pooh-pooh his panacea for producing the *mens sana in corpore sano*, at least labour under the disadvantage of not having tried it; he may tell them that if they have neither rowed nor run races, they have never lived, and they are not in a position to contradict him.

What with the excitement of the *tête-à-tête*, and watching the now evenly ebbing river, Herbert grew sleepy, a state not improbably produced by generous and prolonged feeding; at length, however, he roused himself, paid the bill, and Lydia having reluctantly torn herself away from the open window, they walked leisurely towards the Railway Station.

Hearing the train just on the point of drawing up, they hurried on to the platform, and ran almost into the arms of Mrs. Chimpainter, who—as what is called luck would have it—had been to see her old friend and schoolfellow Elizabeth Kewlter, residing on Richmond Hill. Mrs. Chimpainter took in the situation at a glance, her face assumed its severest expression without the slightest delay, and she asked in a scornful tone, “Who’s that girl, Herbert?”

“Oh! you don’t know her,” he replied turning to run after Lydia, who had walked on along the platform.

“You’d better come in the carriage with me,” said Mrs. Chimpainter, in a way which was intended to render the suggestion a command.

“See you presently,” gasped Herbert, hardly knowing what to say, and he hurried on, fearing that the train would start without him.

When he came up with Lydia, the manner in which she asked, “Oh! are

you coming with me?" told him that she was rather nettled.

"Of course," replied Herbert, "why not?"

"Oh! I don't know," she said in an uncertain sort of way, still moving towards the extreme front of the train, where they at last found an unoccupied carriage.

"Was that your mother?" asked Lydia after some minutes' silence.

"Yes."

"I thought so," continued Lydia, and then with a return of her usual spirits, she added laughingly, "you'll catch it for not letting your mother know you were out."

"So you thought I was going to run away, and leave you to go home alone?" said Herbert putting his hand round her waist.

"Well, I thought that the maternal influence might perhaps prove too strong," replied Lydia, slyly.

"I hope that even the maternal influence would not make me do a shabby

trick," said Herbert, experiencing the uncomfortable feeling of having placed himself in a false position. He knew that the proper course would have been to introduce Lydia to his mother, but that would have been equivalent to saying 'This is the young lady I am going to marry,' and he was as yet a long way from having made up his mind to take that very serious step, which—but for the accidental meeting, might not even have occurred to him for a considerable time, so unwilling do men seem to bind themselves in the almost infrangible bonds of matrimony, while women, as a rule, jump at the first chance. Is this state of things attributable to the unfair conditions which have for so many ages existed between the sexes? or must it be looked for in the excessive supply of women tending to lower their value? Perhaps both causes may have a hand in the effect.

Knowing his mother's weakness, Herbert felt tolerably certain that even had he introduced Lydia to her, she would have

been the reverse of gracious to a girl who might for aught she knew to the contrary be highly objectionable, and who at all events was not of her own choosing.

Fearing some unpleasant scene on arriving at Waterloo station, he left the train at Vauxhall. Before it had come to a perfect standstill at the terminus, Mrs. Chimpainter jumped out in fierce haste—thereby subjecting herself to an admonition from one of the porters—expecting to pounce on her erring son without difficulty. Waiting till all the passengers had passed through the iron gate at the end of the platform, she wended her way home sorrowful and very heavy, for she was one of those good souls who thought that anything done by those dear to her without her knowledge and approval, must—*ipso facto*—be highly reprehensible.

When Herbert reached home, it was past the usual supper time, and the white cloth was left for him at one end of the table; Mr. Chimpainter was sitting on one side of the table, reading the “West-

minster," and his wife sat facing him with her knitting, and her severest frown.

Herbert sat down to eat a little bread and cheese, and his mother immediately opened fire by saying, "I'm very much displeased with you."

Herbert, intent on cutting the bread, maintained a masterly silence.

"I'm quite sure," proceeded Mrs. Chim-painter, "that girl, or young lady, or whatever you call her, is not a fit companion for you; you've been brought up and educated as a gentleman, and I know she can't be——"

"I don't see how you can know anything about her," interrupted Herbert, with his mouth full.

"If she's a fit companion for you, why don't you bring her here and introduce her? If you've chosen her for your wife, bring her home, and we will give her a hearty welcome; wont we, Arthur!"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Chim-painter, who, when his wife lectured, took rather less part in the performance than the

chorus in a Greek play, or an *Umbra* at a Roman dinner party.

"But I've no idea of taking a wife, at present," said Herbert, petulantly.

"Then you're doing the young woman a great injury; you don't suppose that you can keep up her acquaintance without causing her to become attached to you. You wouldn't like to make her unhappy, would you?"

"No, of course not!" replied Herbert, still eating.

"Well, then, let me entreat you to give up this acquaintance; you don't want to break my heart and bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, do you?" asked Mrs. Chimpainter, melting into tears at the thought, and stretching out her open hand on the table for Herbert to take.

Herbert went on eating and declined to see the hand; merely giving vent to an exclamation of impatience. When his mother tried the "pathetic business" he looked upon it as an attempt to take an

unfair advantage, and it rather tended to harden him than otherwise.

Mrs. Chimpainter withdrew her hand, thinking it had not been seen, and continued in a more cheerful vein, "Who is this young lady? has she a father and mother?"

"Yes," replied Herbert, taking a long pull at his pint tankard, for he found dining at Richmond to be very thirsty work.

"Have you visited at her house, or——?"

"No," interrupted Herbert.

"Then you're encouraging her to go out without her parents' knowledge; that's not right. Why, when your father took a fancy to me, he at once asked papa if he might pay his addresses to me, didn't you, Arthur?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Chimpainter, still reading his "Westminster."

"And what are her parents?" asked Mrs. Chimpainter.

Herbert felt half inclined not to answer, only he thought it would look as though

he were ashamed, so he said, sulkily, "They keep a coffee-house."

"Well," said Mrs. Chimpainter, in a manner at once conciliatory and patronising, "that's a very respectable position, no doubt; but I should like my boy to aspire to something higher. You've had a good education, and you——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Herbert, impatiently, "but I don't aspire to anything of the kind at present; one is not going to marry every girl one looks at or walks with."

"But it isn't right; is it, Arthur?" said Mrs. Chimpainter, quite sure of being supported in an appeal to her husband.

"Certainly not!" he replied; "it's——not the thing——in fact, it isn't right," and having made this unusually long comment, he again relapsed into the "Westminster."

"There, you hear what your father says," continued Mrs. Chimpainter, "and you're quite sure he wouldn't say so if he didn't think so."

Herbert was on the point of saying, "Of course he says what you ask him for," but he refrained, and Mrs. Chimpainter continued—

"Let me entreat you to give up this acquaintance. There, we'll say no more about it, and I shall trust to your good sense."

Mrs. Chimpainter brightened a little at the close of her exhortation, as a matter of policy ; but Herbert was no more affected than he had been by the "pathetic business ;" having no intention of separating himself from Lydia he said nothing ; he repeatedly assured himself that he ought not to be asked abruptly to rouse himself out of the delicious somnolence in which alone "love's young dream" is possible. For nearly a quarter of a century he had been existing as it were in a dull, sunless sort of winter, lately he had suddenly drifted into warm bright summer, and he was asked voluntarily to return to the chilly season. Although feeling a dim sense of naughtiness and impropriety in

his newly found pleasure, the self-denial required for its abandonment seemed altogether disproportionate to its culpability. He had always possessed and exhibited at least the usual amount of filial love and obedience, but this was a case which he felt to be beyond maternal jurisdiction; his mother on the other hand looked upon the matter as almost aggravated contempt of court, and with this feeling there was an admixture of feminine jealousy at having been supplanted in her son's love by a sweetheart almost before she considered him fit to indulge in such a luxury.

CHAPTER VII.

DECISION.

As Herbert in moody silence sat finishing his bread and cheese, he came to the hasty conclusion that in future when in Lydia's company, he would carefully avoid running against his mother; but nevertheless, the unexpected encounter and the words to which it led, set him thinking. Hitherto that strict sense of untarnished honour and virtue—which is sometimes found in youths whose moral culture has been carefully tended—had not been dulled by association with careless and libertine companions, and sometimes the thought dimly flitted across his mind that this all-absorbing passion must either lead to marriage or to something still more embarrassing. As his love grew warmer

and warmer, it would be incorrect to say that no idea of unlawfully possessing Lydia had ever entered his mind, but the only result of the temptation had been to make him more fully on his guard to resist it. There are times when it is almost physically impossible for a woman to refuse her lover any favour he may be base enough or weak enough to ask ; but with Herbert, the habits of self-restraint which his mother had so carefully inculcated, rendered him as incapable of wronging a woman, as of robbing a man ; and in fact he would have thought the former sin by far the most heinous, although in one case the laws of his country would have promptly punished him, while in the other he would have been tolerably certain of going scot free. So that Lydia stood in no danger of being induced to stoop to that folly which women generally expiate so much more severely than they ought to do, considering the very indifferent character for chastity which is borne by the other sex ; but the law of supply and demand is paramount,

and regulates even the relation between the sexes. If women were scarcer, they might not be less virtuous, but men would have to be more so; and the frailties of the lords of creation would be punished with that severity which is now only meted out to ladies; if some of the healthy old despotisms still existed, the experiment might be easily tried for a few centuries, by causing a certain proportion of female infants to be served like superfluous kittens.

Yet Herbert had occasionally noticed a shade pass over Lydia's beautiful face, even when her spirits were at their highest; and he innocently set it down to the cause at which his mother had hinted. He thought that an attachment kept secret from her parents must sometimes sadden and depress her; and he began to think over the three courses which generally present themselves in a dilemma, not less to a private individual than to a prime minister. Firstly, he could say, "I'm very sorry, but our social status being so different, I think it would be better

to cease our acquaintance,—you may always count me as a friend, and I shall always look back with pleasure on the happy days we've passed together." This is the course that would have been taken by prudent young men of the period, not overburdened with too much sense of justice or fine feeling. True, the woman's love may have twined itself round her hope and life, eventually stifling it like a useless weed ; the prudent young man may be sorry for the wreck he has caused if he happens to hear of it ; but still he can't be blamed for the existing order of things ;—a thousand distractions serve to chase the sickly sentiment from his head, and there is always a large stock of more suitable ladies on hand to choose from ; the woman will be probably less fortunate, but that is her look out.

Secondly, he could ask her to be his mistress, with very little prospect of refusal ; for it was not necessary for a conjuror to tell him how dotingly she

loved him. But, then, in that case there would be the almost inevitable parting, however long it might be postponed, besides the possibility of various unpleasant contingencies, such as providing for an illegitimate family, etc., so that this course seemed even more objectionable than the prudent young man's.

Thirdly, he could marry her—a most stupendous step truly; but he felt that he had gone too far to retreat with honour to himself or with justice to Lydia. He could not help acknowledging that, looking solely at her station, it might have been better had he never sought her acquaintance; or, rather, that he could perhaps have felt more perfectly happy in her love had she been of his own class of life; but of this he was quite certain, that he had never yet seen a woman who had made the slightest approach to enslaving him as she had done; and it occurred to him, that if he were to decide on waiting for a partner possessing all the charms of person and character, which

he so much admired in Lydia, plus the advantage of more desirable parentage, by the time this desideratum became attainable, his bones might be found helping to produce wheat for unsympathising posterity.

Of course, he had long since come to the conclusion that enjoyment is no more the zenith of human happiness than death is the nadir of misery; but in view of the shortness and imperfection of life, he considered it right to rest content with one who now appeared to be more than sufficiently heart-filling, in preference to waiting an indefinite period on the chance of some day meeting an incarnate female perfection, who after all might not take his fancy. There could be no doubt that the case was quite unlike other human aims at a high ideal. In art man may improve on his most perfect works until lulled to rest by the considerate hand of death, who sees when the poor worn-out machine can do no more creditable work, and

breaks it up like an old ship, whose materials will serve to build new vessels.

With mating, however, it is very different. If a man keep on improving his taste in female beauty of form and character till he reach the age of seventy, he will probably fail to secure the object of his choice when he has found her.

So Herbert finally made up his mind to wed ; it may be objected that he had not as yet asked the lady's consent, and that there had been no sufficiently long courtship to entitle him to do so, but in reality all that lengthy farce of attack and defence has been gradually going out of fashion for the last hundred years. We are doubtless a very conservative race, but still, things do alter in the course of a century or so. Life is so fast now, and time is so valuable, that people have left off indulging in that laborious trifling with courtship which was considered *de rigueur* by our ancestors. Now there is no such thing as love-making, we are getting too matter of fact for it. In these days

of sharp struggles for mere existence, when a man has arrived at the desirable financial state of being able to keep a wife and a half score or so of children, having decided on marrying he soon fixes on his object, and knows to a certainty whether he can attain it, before even making his approaches; he proposes promptly and the business is done.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROPOSAL.

THE view from one of the London Bridges by moonlight may not be quite so picturesque as that from the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, but to a native of Middlesex it has the—hardly to be over-rated—advantage of being at home. However much the Londoner may admire the mellow glories of the Queen of the Adriatic, there must always be a certain—at least slight—drawback, in the ever present idea of the unavoidable annoyances to be encountered in ‘getting home.’

With some, the dreadful, uncertain passage of the English Channel, would alone be almost sufficient to deter them from leaving the discomforts of Hades for joys of Elysium.

Indolent people—and it is to be feared they are largely on the increase—dread returning to the daily grind of an occupation which they follow without pride or love, merely that they may feed, and dress, and give parties, like their neighbours.

The worshipper of beauty anticipates with disgust the feelings which will be produced in him by the flat uninteresting outline of London streets.

The dreamy man, rejoicing in the delicious quiet of liquid roads, traversed by smoothly gliding gondolas, thinks with horror of the excruciating din of omnibuses, cabs and heavy waggons jolting over uneven pavements. But the wise Englishman, who loves his country and remains in or near the world's metropolis all the year round, experiences none of these agonising fears and forebodings. Should he yearn to feel afloat on some limpid stream, the penny steamboat—blushing where its shapely sides touch the water, in a garment of pink paint—is always

ready to carry him, say from London Bridge or the Temple, to Battersea Park, or better still if the tide suit, he subsidizes a Thames waterman and his skiff, thus enjoying the privacy and quiet of a gondola, combined with company, vastly more entertaining than that of most gondoliers, especially if you don't speak their language like a native. Arrived at the park, what more pleasant than to muse in some retired and shady walk, or to make a quite sufficiently near approach to the blazing tropics, by a stroll through the beautifully kept sub-tropical department; the return is easy, and the excursion has not cost more than it would have done in Venice.

To the Briton, who likes to view the moonlit waters with his lady-love, Southwark Bridge, before the abolition of the penny-toll, offered a never-tiring scene of beauty, by no means inferior in its way to the Bridge of Sighs. In fact, educated Venetians of good taste would no doubt prefer it, on the same principle

as Englishmen admire Venice—because it lies at a distance, and the getting there involves considerable pain. He must indeed have no eye for the beautiful who can stand in the centre of Southwark Bridge, and look westward unmoved: the other bridges looming black on the silvery waters, bounded by glimmering lamps as far as the eye can reach; a barge or two leisurely floating down to within a short distance from where you stand, over the swishing tide, and then rushing through the dark arch, with a low creaking moan, like a lost soul borne along by Satan. The bridge itself is a solitude, save for the heavy tread of the policeman, whose burly figure stands out grim and statuesque in the moonlight, and who glances suspiciously at Lydia and Herbert, looking over on to the dancing waters, as though he thought they had been so wickedly wasteful as to pay a penny for the sake of disturbing the quiet of his beat by jumping over, when they could have in-

dulged in the same luxury at Waterloo for a halfpenny, or from Blackfriars or Westminster free of charge.

But both the suspected parties had of late discovered too much sunny joy in the known, to feel any desire to tempt the dark uncertainty of the "not to be." Herbert enjoyed the quiet; there was no spot less frequented of an evening, within a mile or two. If he walked along the noisy streets he could hardly hear himself speak; they were decidedly unfavourable localities in which to make an offer of marriage. Although he had come to this spot for the express purpose of taking the most momentous step in life, and had fully made up his mind that there was no other course open to him, yet with the words on his lips he hesitated. The idea of becoming a husband so much earlier in life than he had ever contemplated rather staggered him; there was that vague fear of making an almost unrectifiable move in the game of life, which makes most men hesitate, and,

finally, take a desperate, awkward plunge, like a bather's first header.

They stood side by side, Lydia looking down on the swiftly-ebbing river, and Herbert gazing straight out into space.

"Lydia," he said, after a long pause, "I've been thinking that it must grieve your mother and father to know, or at least to suspect, that you take evening walks with some one to whom they've not been introduced, and of whose intentions they know nothing."

"Oh, you need not worry yourself on that account," said Lydia quickly, fearing that Herbert might be going to make this an excuse for giving up her acquaintance—the bare idea making her heart beat so that she could hear it.

"My mother—or mama as the genteel young ladies at Mrs. Frumpton's would say—is a very easy-going old lady; she thinks I'm taking a stroll with some of the girls of the shop; and father—well I don't believe he ever thinks at all, except about his dinner."

“Ah! but they’re sure to find it out sooner or later,” said Herbert, gravely; “and I wanted you to tell me at what time it would be best for me to call on them to ask their consent to our marriage,—that is, if you don’t object,” he added with a smile.

Watching her face by the pale, weird moonlight, he saw the same pained look steal over it, which he had noticed once or twice before, and which he had attributed to a cause which he now offered to remove.

“Oh, no!” she said, clasping her hands in a scared manner; “don’t think of it; your mother would never sanction such a thing.”

“Why you silly little girl,” said Herbert playfully touching her face with his forefinger, “surely you’re not afraid of my mother; when she knows that I’ve made up my mind, she’ll be gracious enough, and take to you like a daughter of her own, I know her so well.”

“No, no, Herbert, it can never be, anything but that, sooner——but why can’t

we always be to each other as we are now? I should be quite happy if I could only see you often."

"Nonsense, Lyddy, there's nothing to be so dreadfully frightened about, don't you love me?"

"You know I do," she answered in a low constrained murmur, "but—"

"But what?"

"Well there's no hurry you know," said Lydia, forcing a smile, "I'm sure the pleasures of courtship must be as much nicer than the prosaic dulness of marriage, as a blush rose is than a chrysanthemum, judging from what I've seen of married couples."

"Yes, but you can't have blush roses at the end of autumn, unless you force them, and it's pretty to see even the hardy chrysanthemum, when it's too late for the more delicate flowers."

"Yes, but I'm sure I shouldn't like marriage half so well as these stolen meetings; no, Herbert, don't talk about it again if you love me; in a year or two perhaps—"

“Year or two indeed! you little humbug, I won’t listen to you.”

“Yes, Herbert, there’s a dear, you won’t mention it again yet for some time, will you?” she said coaxingly, looking up at him for the first time since he had mentioned the subject, her lovely face seeming doubly beautiful by the silver glimmer of the moon.

“Fiddle-de-dee! I didn’t think you were such a timid little thing; tell me, when is the best time for me to call and see your mother.”

“No, no, you can’t see her,” she said half fretfully, half laughingly, resting both hands on his arm.

“There there, it shan’t be worried. I’ll take my chance, and call just when I fancy,” said Herbert playfully, and kissing her lips he led her away towards the City.

“No, no,” began Lydia, and then breaking off, she answered only in monosyllables, till Herbert parted from her at the corner of the street where she lived.

CHAPTER IX.

A SPY.

AT about one o'clock on the day following the proposal on Southwark Bridge things were going on much as usual in the house of Dumlin; Ephraim, James, Harry and Mr. Richard Blacklock, had dropped in one after the other, and Mrs. Dumlin had allowed them under protest to cut the joint as it hung at the fire, 'Willum' the father had come in shortly afterwards, with his head and narrow chest well thrown back as usual, to prevent his corporation taking an unfair advantage of him.

"Here's the old man come in, just in time for the prime cut," observed Mr. Blacklock with a wink.

"Yes, so I should think, when all you gobble-gutses has had your knives into

it," said Mrs. Dumlin, taking up a plate for her husband from under the grate and blowing the dust off, before giving it a rub with her apron.

"Never mind, Willum, you don't mind so long as you gets it, do you Willum?" said James, patronisingly.

"No, the old man don't mind, he's the right sort, he is," observed Ephraim.

"No, Willum don't mind, he's a nice old man, ain't you Willum?" said Mr. Blacklock.

"Ah! you boys, you always gets the best of me, coming in so early," returned Mr. Dumlin, sharpening his black-handled knife on his fork, and then feeling the edge, "but I likes quantity I do, so long as you leaves me enough, you may cut it where you like." And Mr. Dumlin suiting the action to the word helped himself to meat, and began eating in a manner suggestive of a cross between the domestic pig and a polar bear. At this moment a postman entered the public room, with the hurried confident walk of

his class, and delivered a letter for Mrs. Dumlin.

Mrs. Blacklock who having finished her dinner was attending to the customers, brought in the letter and gave it to her mother.

"Letter for me!" exclaimed Mrs. Dumlin turning it over and over so as to inspect first the address and then the seal, without appearing to derive the slightest information from either, "who can this be from I wonder? who on earth should write to me? I don't know the handwriting, I'm sure."

"Well, old gal, if I was you, I'd look inside, it might tell you who it come from," suggested Mr. Blacklock, coolly.

"Yes, go on, old gal, let's have a look," said Ephraim, holding out his hand.

Without taking any notice of him, Mrs. Dumlin broke the seal, and began reading the letter; first she raised her eyebrows, then a muttered "Good Lord!" escaped her. "I knowed she'd come to something some day, I always said so," soliloquised the good lady a little further on, then

after having carefully spelt it through two or three times, she folded it up, replaced it in its envelope, and put it in her pocket.

“There! there’s a sneak,” said Harry, pointing at his mother with his fore-finger, “never showed it to nobody.”

“I say, old man, I wouldn’t have that,” said Mr. Blacklock, “I should make her show it up, the old woman’s made an appointment with some new sweetheart, and she’s going to throw you over.”

“Don’t you be so fast, Mr. Dick, about what don’t concern you,” said Mrs. Dumlin.

Mr. Dumlin merely said “Oh!” with great solemnity, and went on with his dinner.

“Now then,” said Mrs. Dumlin sharply, “them as has done their dinners had better clear out; I don’t want a parcel of fellows sticking about here all the afternoon; here make room some of you for your sister Lydia.”

“Yes, make room some of you for your sister Lydia,” said Mr. Blacklock, without showing any signs of moving.

Lydia came in, looking more grave than she had done for several days—and sat down to the table; her brothers nodded to her, and slouched out in single file. Mr. Blacklock remained on his seat, with his head heavily resting on one hand, staring at his pretty sister-in-law.

“I’ve been thinking she ain’t much like the rest of the family,” he said at length, without altering his position.

“Never you mind about the rest of the family, Mr. Dick,” said Mr. Dumlin, nodding his head rather severely at his son-in-law, “if you get your belly full, that’s enough for you, I should think.”

“No offence, Willum, you know; but she ain’t now, is she? When you come to look at her, there ain’t no family likeness, now is there?”

“Never you mind about ‘coming to look at her,’ or ‘family likeness’ neither,” said Mr. Dumlin still more severely, “if

you don't want nothing more, why take it and go."

"Well, there, you needn't cut 'up rough about it, Willum, old man, no offence, you know, I'll drop the subject if it gives offence," said Mr. Blacklock, removing his head from his hand, and putting both hands into his trousers pockets, he leaned back in his chair, and looked at his father-in law, with an expression of surprise—not quite unmixed with satisfaction—for Mr. Dumlin was a man of mild, if not polished, manners, and had never before rebuffed his son-in-law so roughly.

But Mr. Blacklock was not thin-skinned, so he maintained his position, and continued to stare at Lydia.

Mr. Dumlin having finished his dinner by this time, resumed his leather apron, and went out.

Lydia ate her dinner almost in silence, and returned to Mrs. Frumpton's, Mr. Blacklock still remaining immovable.

Mrs. Dumlin kept bustling in and out,

as if fidgetted by his presence, and at length when it was nearly four o'clock, she could refrain no longer. Entering abruptly, she said with as much unconcern as she could assume, "I say Mr. Dick, are you going to stop here all day, and all night too? I've got some one coming to see me here presently on private business, like."

"Oh! all right, old gal, why didn't you say so before? 'I'm off,' as the engine said when it left the metals; good bye, shall I leave you a lock of my hair?"

"There get out with you, do," said Mrs. Dumlin, "you're more trouble than all the rest put together."

"Well don't say I didn't offer, you know, good bye," said Mr. Blacklock, as he slouched out of the room, in a style somewhat similar to that of his brothers-in-law. Just as he reached the outer door, he met Herbert Chimpainter coming in.

"It's very certain that ain't the cove," muttered Mr. Blacklock, turning partly

round to glance at the new comer, and then sauntered down the street, with his hands stuck in the pockets of his cut away coat, meditatively biting the end of a quill toothpick.

CHAPTER X.

BREED.

THE letter, which so excited Mr. Blacklock's curiosity, was from Herbert, and he had come to keep his appointment.

Mrs. Dumlin felt "quite flustered like," as she afterwards expressed it to her husband—at the sight of her son-in-law elect's very gentlemanly exterior. Apologising for the simplicity of her toilet, which consisted of the usual limp print dress, with its sleeves tucked up to the elbow, she ushered him upstairs, on to the first floor, and into a front room, with high skirting all round, which had been painted a light drab at some remote period, but lapse of time had darkened and mellowed it almost to mahogany colour, and had caused all joins in the

panels to be distinctly visible. In this room, the Dumlins sometimes held parties; in its normal state, however, it was so very much furnished that, as each fresh guest came in, some article of furniture had to go out, either on to the landing, or into the adjoining bed-room.

Herbert had, of course, prepared what he should say, and on being invited by his future mother-in-law to take a seat, he squeezed his way with difficulty to a chair, and began, rather stiffly, not without some catching of his breath:—

“My letter will have no doubt informed you as to the purport of my visit, and——”

“Oh yes, sir,” interrupted Mrs. Dumlin, “and a very nice letter, too. I am sure. She’s a good gal, though I say it as shouldn’t; but I always knowed she’d come to something, and I always said so.”

“I was about to remark,” continued Herbert, his ideas rather disarranged by the interruption, “that I’ve come here to formally ask your consent to my marriage with your daughter, Lydia.”

"Oh! lor, sir," simpered Mrs. Dumlin, "if you and Lyddy's satisfied it's sure to be all right."

"Besides being in receipt of a liberal salary," resumed Herbert, "I shall receive one hundred a year under the will of a maternal aunt, as soon as I'm married, and I——"

"Don't name it, sir, for I'm sure money's the very last thing as our Lyd would think of."

"Perhaps you'd think it more satisfactory to see my mother, or father, on the subject."

"Oh! my goodness gracious, no, sir," said Mrs. Dumlin, raising her hands in horror at the bare idea; "not by no means I wouldn't; I hope I know myself better. My old fool of a mother—she's dead now, poor old soul—she'd have jumped at the chance, she would; she thought herself good enough to speak to anyone, and the consequence was, she used to make a fool of herself."

"Then I think I understand you to say,

that you've no objection to my union with your daughter?" said Herbert, smiling slightly, now that an interview which had not been particularly pleasing to him seemed so nearly at an end.

"Oh! not the least bit in the world, sir," replied Mrs. Dumlin, blandly; "but between you and me and the post, sir, I think I ought to tell you that she isn't our daughter at all!"

"Not your daughter?" said Herbert, surprised, but not exactly grieved at the news, for it occurred to him that, although the parentage of his future wife would not affect his love for her, yet the intelligence that she came of a rather more exalted stock than the Dumlins, would not be altogether unwelcome to him.

"No, sir, she aint our daughter; Sue's the only gal as we ever had, and she aint a beauty exactly. No! our Lyd, as we call her, is the child of a gentleman, as went to Australia, which his name was Beauchamp."

"Beauchamp! a very old name——"

"Yes, sir, and a very good name, so I've heard; but it can't be too good for her; howsumdever that's neither here nor there, is it? Well, sir, this gentleman went to Australia under rayther pecooliar circumstances."

"Indeed?" said Herbert, thinking that the gentleman had perhaps left the country for his country's good; his passage being paid by a community, who preferred his room to his company.

"Yes, sir," continued Mrs. Dumlin, using her right forefinger to give increased emphasis to her narrative; "well, you must know this gentleman was very rich, he was—very rich indeed; and he had a large estate down in Devonshire or Yorkshire, or somewheres, which had been in the family for——oh, before Queen Anne's time, a long while! Well, sir, what must he do but take to horse-racing—betting on horses."

"Yes, they frequently do," remarked Herbert gravely.

"Ah! and more's the pity sir, I say;

well he bets, and he bets, and he bets, till he loses all his estates, and one Derby day, the wrong horse wins—as they very often does, I believe sir—and he finds he's got to pay several thousands more than he's worth, or be posted as a welcher, or a blackleg, or whatever they calls it."

"A defaulter," suggested Herbert.

"Yes, sir; well he tosses up a sovereign, whether he should blow his brains out, or bolt to Australia. My brother see him do it, Jemmy Masham, sir, as used to be champion of the light weights, I day say you may have heard of him."

Herbert intimated that he had hitherto been deprived of that pleasure.

"No you wouldn't perhaps," said Mrs. Dumlin, tolerantly, "he was knowed as 'the little skelington' in general, perhaps you might have heard of him by that name."

Herbert was obliged to confess ignorance even of the famous Jemmy's *nom de guerre*.

"Well, that don't argyfy nothing, do

it? My name was Masham afore I married Dumlin. Howsumdever, it come down heads I goes to Australia—the sovereign I mean—and he goes; and Jemmy goes with him, they was always about together at all the races, for Mr. Beauchamp had taken a great fancy to Jemmy, he had, and couldn't go anywheres without him."

"What? a gentleman make a companion of a prize fighter?" asked Herbert, in astonishment.

"Oh! lor yes, sir, haven't you never heard that before?"

Herbert couldn't say he had.

"Oh yes, lots of young swells used to do it; well, Mr. Beauchamp went away when little Lyd was about one year old, leaving her with us,—her mother died in her confinement, poor thing—and for ten year he sent over money quite regular, and then we heard he'd gone to the diggings and we've heard nothing of him since."

"Then you don't know whether he's alive or dead?" said Herbert, thoughtfully.

"No but I should rather say he's dead, sure to be dead, or we should have heard of him before, and poor Jemmy, we've never heard nothing of him."

"But still, you feel as easy in giving your consent to Lydia's marriage as though she were your own daughter?" said Herbert.

"Oh! yes sir; Mr. Beauchamp left her entirely in our charge, and since we've thought him dead, we've looked on her quite as our own, and we've never let her know that she isn't."

"Well, I don't think I need detain you any longer," said Herbert rising, "you'll tell Lydia that I've been here, for she didn't know that I was coming."

"Very good, sir," simpered Mrs. Dumlin, as she opened the door, and walked on to the landing, in order to superintend the exit of her illustrious visitor. "Mind the stairs—they are rather steep and very dark;" and the two parted with mutual esteem.

Herbert sauntered slowly along towards

the railway station, thinking whether the news about Lydia's parentage ought in any way to affect either himself or Lydia. He had heard of people left by their parents, at a very early period of their existence, who, after a lengthy search, causing the neglect of all other business, on finding one or other of their defaulting progenitors, had indulged in an embrace of delirious rapture, exclaiming, "My father!" or "My mother!" as the case might be, and forthwith transferring all the natural affection, which had hitherto been bestowed on their nurse or guardian, to a quite unknown individual. To Herbert it would seem about as reasonable for a chicken to go into ecstasies over its real mother, while it ignored all claims of the hen who hatched and nurtured it. He knew that women are more apt than men to give way to this sort of sentiment; but he thought that he had observed in Lydia a common sense which would render her superior to the weakness of desiring to postpone her

the advent of a father whom she had never known, and who might have departed this life long ago. So he determined on letting her know that she was not exactly the person she had hitherto believed herself to be ; and it occurred to him that when he introduced her to his mother, the fact of her having come of such a good stock might in some measure assuage the pang of knowing that she had been brought up in a coffee shop. His mother had challenged him to present her, and he meant to take her at her word.

CHAPTER XI.

TABLE PHILOSOPHY.

MR. CHIMPAINTER Senior was not more insensible to the charms of a good dinner than are other men and women in this not exceptionally gross material age, and he liked the company of a friend or two, with whom he could enjoy a pleasant chat.

On the next day but one after Herbert's interview with Mrs. Dumlin, a select party of five had been invited to feed at the *château* Chimpainter; consisting of the Rev. Josiah Jorkin and his wife, Mr. Galp, the chief surgeon of the place, and his wife, and Mr. Crimshull, the solicitor.

Mrs. Galp and Mrs. Jorkin were very close friends; they dressed at each other, and furnished their houses at each other,

and called each other names behind each other's backs, in the most neighbourly manner. Mrs. Galp took delight in inviting the attention of her friends to Mrs. Jorkin's grasping attitude at cards,—her black looks if she happened to lose twopence-halfpenny at a round game, and the intense glee with which she raked in her winnings; her general meanness, the immense amount of work she got out of her two servants, the short time she was able to keep them, and the like.

Mrs. Jorkin of course took equal pleasure in condemning Mrs. Galp's looseness of discipline with her servants, their frequent holidays, their being sometimes allowed to take a walk in the summer evenings—in fine, the absurdity of treating them rather as equals than as beings of a very inferior caste, necessarily possessing feelings and aspirations totally different from those of their mistresses; and above all, their being allowed to dress exactly as they chose, so that mistress and servant were hardly distinguishable. Mrs. Galp,

however, declared that with all Mrs. Jorkin's care, a stranger would have found it difficult to know which was which.

The two husbands were on especially good terms; but Mr. Galp, although scarcely approving of Mrs. Jorkin's tyranny and meanness, secretly wished that his wife would not take so much comfort from irritating her, for he was not ignorant of the fact that at least some portion of the leniency with which his servants were treated arose from the enjoyment of Mrs. Jorkin's annoyance; and the Rector would have been better pleased had his wife been less sour-tempered.

Mr. Chimpainter's dinners were very simple: a joint, with specialities in bread, and vegetables, two sorts of pastry, followed by hard biscuits and cheese, completed the bill of fare. He was too well aware of the general ignorance of mankind, to encourage that very prevalent vice of over-feeding, by loading the table with course after course of superfluous victuals:

if his guests drank too much, the fact and its cause were tolerably patent, but if they over-ate, this rule did not hold good. It is easy to blame the language for not possessing a good equivalent word for "drunk" as applied to solids, but the people who have not remedied the defect are of course really culpable; public dinners are doubtless valuable as stimulants to charity, but they will continue to be very demoralising, till the capacity of a stomach is better understood.

Mr. Chimpainter took a pardonable pride in his wines, which were all put on the table with the meat; his three different sorts of champagne were worthy of a special ode where all were choice. There was no encouragement to post-prandial boozing; the host never drank more than one glass of wine after dinner; his guests could do as they chose, but they understood that all the most heavenly vintages were removed with the cloth.

As soon as the removal of the cover had gladdened the Rector's heart by the

sight of a splendid sirloin, he remarked to the hostess, "Each time that I have the pleasure of dining here, I expect to see that noble joint replaced by a dish of hominy, or barley-meal, or oatmeal porridge."

"Yes, John's very peculiar," said Mrs. Chimpainter, smiling; "but he'll never get me to do without meat, nor any one else, I think, if he talks and writes till doomsday."

"I don't think he'd like to give it up himself," said Mrs. Jorkin, with a slight twitch at the corners of her mouth, which was the nearest approach she could make to a smile; thinking the while whether a total absence of meat would make a servant's keep any cheaper.

"You'll never make a convert of me, Mr. Chimpainter," said Mrs. Galp, rather gushingly, "and the Doctor says half his patients would be dead in a fortnight if they couldn't get any meat."

"I'd soon convert you," said Mr. Chimpainter, "with a good stiff Act of Parlia-

ment, making it as penal to sell beef and mutton, as it now is to cut a steak of your grandmother, after first poleaxing her."

"Without axing her leave," suggested Mr. Crimshull.

"Oh, Mr. Chimpainter!" said both the ladies in horror.

"But really I don't think I quite understand your motive," said the Rector.

"Motive!" returned Mr. Chimpainter: "why did we abolish spitting on Jews, witch-burning, bull-baiting, and the slave trade?—simply because they were barbarous customs."

"Yes, yes, quite so," said the Rector; "but there's nothing barbarous about slaughtering animals for food,—it's been done from time immemorial."

"So had the slave trade, and yet we voted it barbarous, and inhuman, and so on; but it seems to me that killing adult animals just to save ourselves a little trouble is still worse."

"But we must have meat of some kind," suggested the Rector persuasively.

"I don't agree with you," returned Mr. Chimpainter : "suppose the supply of edible beasts should fail, would you advocate the butchery of niggers or working men? Perhaps, as you so strongly insist on flesh being an absolute necessary, you wouldn't mind seeing in the market reports, 'Fine fat negroes were quoted at ten shillings to ten and sixpence per stone, sinking the offal; superfluous artizans, nine shillings to nine and three.' "

"No, I shouldn't like to see that," said the Rector smiling; "that would be a very different thing."

"I really don't see it," said Mr. Chimpainter; "I should feel no more compunction in eating nigger cutlets than I should in dining off mutton chops; only I fancy the latter would be preferable."

The Rector merely laughed at the idea, and helped himself to a glass of very curious old sherry.

"That's all very well, you know," said Mr. Galp, "but negroes are our fellow creatures."

"So are sheep and oxen," retorted Mr. Chimpainter, "much less conceited fellow creatures."

"But not so highly organized," suggested Mr. Galp.

"Quite," returned the host; "they merely lack the power of speech, which is the cause of their many virtues. In time they may acquire it; if they do they'll soon settle the question of flesh-eating, but I think it will be settled long before. It's purely a question of human education: the longer you're allowed to cram the book of Genesis down people's throats as something sacred, Mr. Rector, the longer we shall kill our poor fellow animals."

"But wouldn't you allow us either fish or fowl, or even a good red herring?" asked Mr. Jorkin, carefully avoiding the risk of generating any *odium theologicum*.

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Chimpainter; "salmon, and mackerel, and even the flattest of flat fish, enjoy life quite as much in their way as we do."

"What! no fish or poultry even, Mr.

Chimpainter?" asked Mrs. Galp in alarm;
"then what should we have to eat?"

"Oh! plenty to eat," replied the host
reassuringly; "you might even have meat
if you chose to make it."

"Make it!" said Mrs. Galp; "what am
I to make it of?"

"Ah! the chemists must teach you
that," replied Mr. Chimpainter; "they'd
very soon find out, if they couldn't get it
any other way; but even without it you
could manage very well. With oil, corn,
vegetables, milk, and wine, what more
can you want? Why, I'd guarantee to
train a man to row, or run a race, with-
out any meat!"

"Ah! but he wouldn't win it!" said the
Rector slyly.

"Well, you see it wouldn't altogether
depend on his food," said Mr. Chimpainter.

"I wonder you haven't left off meat
long ago," said the Rector.

"I don't see why I should; I'm quite
ready to acknowledge that it's more nour-
ishing than any other food, but I don't see

how that affects the question ; we can't lay claim to a very high civilization so long as we eat each other."

"Well I should recommend you to go into parliament, and obtain leave to bring in a Bill to——"

"I'm too old," interrupted Mr. Chim-painter; "it would take a long time to carry—longer even than the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill—but if a young man chose to take it up, he'd be certain to pass it before he died. People would gradually come to see that it was something more than a joke. There would be vested interests to satisfy, such as butchers, graziers, owners of fishing smacks, etc. : once get the Commons to agree to that, and the rest is easy ; it might be done before the end of the century."

"But I'll bet you five dozen of the best champagne that it isn't, though," said the Rector, shaking his head confidently.

"Done!" said the host, "and our children shall pay."

"That's a bet: but where's Master Herbert?" asked the Rector.

"Well, I can't exactly say," replied Mr. Chimpainter; "I only know that he hasn't come home from Town yet. How's your son getting on at Oxford?"

"Oh! splendidly, if I wanted to make a waterman of him. He won the Diamond sculls at Henley this year, and he'll be in the University Boat next spring; but as for anything further, why, I ——"

"I congratulate you," said Mr. Chimpainter. "In a youth who has the advantage of a good education, strength of body means strength of mind; his excellence in athletics is almost a guarantee for his always being a gentleman. Be thankful that he's never likely to indulge in the sickly effeminacy of lying in bed all day to read a novel. Don't sneer at his watermanship, for the man who can win the Diamond sculls will always be able to push his way in the world."

"Well, I'm glad you think so, but I

feel rather anxious about him; he seems to me merely a very fine animal."

"Ah! if we all understood that we are only animals, we should lead better lives, and there would be much less disease; but at present, people seem to think that it is beneath the dignity of human beings to treat their stomachs as if they were part and parcel of themselves; and they speak of any one who endeavours to keep his body in a proper state of efficiency as 'a mere animal,' little thinking what high praise they are bestowing."

"I quite agree with you there," said Mr. Galp, who had been for some little time silent, owing to the lulling effect of the wine; "I quite agree with you: if people were more rational, my occupation would be gone."

"You might make the same remark with great truth, eh, Rector?" said Mr. Chimpainter, slyly.

"Ah! you couldn't do without the clergy," replied Mr. Jorkin, good-humouredly.

"Not yet," returned Mr. Chimpainter.

"You're very hard on the clergy," gushed Mrs. Galp.

Mrs. Jorkin smiled confidently, as though she would have said, "We're a vested interest, and you can't do away with us without paying pretty handsomely."

At this point the neat housemaid entered, and spoke to Mrs. Chimpainter in an undertone. The hostess begged to be excused for a short time, and left the room.

In Mr. Chimpainter's library she found Herbert and Lydia.

"I've taken you at your word, mother," said Herbert. "I've chosen a wife and I've brought her to see you."

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

OF course Mrs. Chimpainter needed no explanation; she had taken in the situation at a glance; it could only mean one thing. Before Herbert finished speaking she had thoroughly criticised, not only the young lady, but her dress, with which latter there was little fault to be found. When she remembered that this girl, who was in her house without her sanction, had been brought up in a coffee-shop, her heart sank within her, and she shivered as if in bodily pain: this was the son for whom she had planned such great things.

"It would have been kinder to have given me some notice of your intentions," she said to him, bowing stiffly to Lydia.

"I really didn't know that we were

coming till the last minute," said Herbert, pleased at being only called to account for a breach of etiquette.

"Well, you haven't told me the young lady's name yet," said Mrs. Chimpainter, with a faint attempt at a smile.

"Ah! if I'd told you the day before yesterday I should have told you wrong," said Herbert, glad of any opportunity to make conversation.

Mrs. Chimpainter slightly raised her eyebrows, but she felt too depressed to make any remark.

"Yes, I should have told you it was Lydia Dumlin," continued Herbert; "but I've since learnt that it's Lydia Beauchamp."

Mrs. Chimpainter again elevated her eyebrows—a little higher this time.

"Yes, it seems that Mr. Beauchamp, after losing a large property on the turf, went to Australia, leaving Lydia with Mrs. Dumlin, and that he hasn't been heard of since Lydia was ten years old."

"What! the daughter of Vincent Beau-

champ, my second cousin!" exclaimed Mrs. Chimpainter, going up to Lydia and kissing her on the forehead. "Ah! poor Vincent, he never wrote to any of his family, and no one knew whether he'd taken his child with him, or what had become of her. So you're Lydia Beauchamp: yes, there's the family likeness, I can see it now. Well, my dear, Herbert hasn't a very grand income to offer you; the daughter of Vincent Beauchamp ought to have made a grand match,—ah! and so you might have done if your father had confided you to some of the family."

"I'd rather make a happy marriage than a grand one," said Lydia smiling, and holding down her head.

"That's quite right, my dear; but it was very inconsiderate of Herbert to bring you down to-day, when he knew I had company."

"I assure you I forgot all about it, mother."

"Well, it's your fault that she can't stay and spend the evening with us; if

you'd told her she could have come prepared; but of course she wouldn't like to meet strangers, as she's not in evening dress."

"Oh no, thank you!" said Lydia, shrinking back at the very thought; "they expect me home early."

Mrs. Chimpainter felt by no means sorry at the inability of her future daughter-in-law to be introduced to the *élite* of Thamwell as represented by Mrs. Galp and Mrs. Jorkin. Although prepossessed by Lydia's appearance, she naturally felt uncertain as to her culture; she might amuse the company with anecdotes of the coffee-room, to the delight of Mrs. Galp, who would enjoy above all things to retail them among her friends. There was a slight under-current of consolation in the fact of her son's intended being a Beauchamp; but having been brought up in low surroundings from the age of one year, she might almost as well have been a Dumlin. After a cheery greeting from Mr. Chimpainter, the

young couple took the train back to town, well pleased that the introduction was over.

The disclosure had come very suddenly on Mrs. Chimpainter, and when she thought of it in solitude, it seemed even more undesirable than during the excitement of the interview, when Lydia's beauty was pleading in her favour. Herbert might as well have married a girl out of an orphan asylum; there could be no pleasant interchange of calls between the two families. Mrs. Chimpainter pictured herself calling at the coffee-shop, or receiving a visit from its mistress, and she shuddered at the thought. In mentioning the matter to her friends there would have to be an awkward reticence about the bride's family and antecedents. Disingenuousness was not one of Mrs. Chimpainter's virtues or faults; not only was she devoid of the accomplishment of putting a false gloss on unfavourable circumstances, but the idea of doing so never occurred to her. In the present

instance she had an undoubtedly good stratum of truth to work upon; with a daughter-in-law of such prepossessing and ladylike appearance, whose father had been a Beauchamp, possessing a good estate, it would have been so easy to say that she had been brought up in the country by a distant relation. But Mrs. Chimpainter was incapable of this style of concealment; she must either state the facts just as they existed, or she must maintain a reserve which would be construed into something worse than the reality.

Mrs. Chimpainter fell into the, at the present day, not very common error, of looking upon any one whom she had known for several years as 'an old friend;' in fact, her acquaintances might be said to be divided into 'old friends,' and 'very old friends.' Reckoning Mrs. Galp and Mrs. Jorkin in the latter category, she thought that if she were to tell them the exact truth, with strict instructions 'not to talk it about,' it would remain a com-

parative secret; having never analysed the inmost workings of her own feelings sufficiently to arrive at Rochefoucauld's conclusion, that "we take a certain pleasure in the misfortunes even of our best friends," she could not picture to herself the mischievous delight which both her confidantes would take in spreading abroad the news of the *quasi*-misalliance.

There were also one or two 'old friends,' who, Mrs. Chimpainter felt quite sure, took a kindly interest in her affairs, to whom she thought it would be right to impart her trials; so that by the time she had told all her 'old friends' and 'very old friends,' she would have been puzzled to name a single acquaintance who knew less of the matter than the trustiest. She was well aware that the interest she felt in the mishaps of other people chiefly consisted in being able to narrate them to somebody in the course of conversation, making comments of condolence in passing; and yet she was quite unable to apply

this knowledge to her own affairs, although if she had heard them discussed by those to whom she confided them, there can be no doubt that she would have thought fit to reconstruct the list of her friends. Her hunger and thirst after sympathy were so great, that the possibility of her misfortunes being rather enjoyed by those to whom she communicated them, never occurred to her.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEIGHT OF HAPPINESS.

IN less than six months from the date of their first becoming acquainted, Lydia and Herbert were man and wife. Of course, Mr. Chimpainter Senior had suggested all such objections to the union as the extreme youth of both parties, the short time they had known each other, and the consequent probability of a not enduring attachment; the chances of the acquisition of a family more numerous than could be brought up on such a comparatively small income, in a manner worthy of the Chimpainter dignity; the highly unsatisfactory companionship to which Lydia had been exposed all her life, and the impossibility of her education having been sufficiently expensive to fit her to associate on equal

terms with the elect of Thamwell, who constituted the Chimpainter circle. On this latter point, Herbert hastened to join issue, with the impetuosity of a good tilter at a tournament; he proved—at least to his own satisfaction—that breed and a moderate education are together more effective than costly tuition and indifferent ancestry, by pointing to more than one young lady of their acquaintance, who in spite of the large sums lavished on their schooling, both at home and abroad, remained mere gawky females, unable to speak or to write their own language correctly. Then the anxious mother appealed to her husband, urging him to do his best to prevent or at least to defer the marriage; but the philosopher was too well acquainted with youth's waywardness under such circumstances to hope for any success; besides, as he could not honestly persuade himself that there was any strong reason against the alliance, his attempts at dissuasion took a very mild form,—in fact, they really consisted in ascertaining

whether his son's heart and life were really bound up in the matter ; and finding that to be the case, the idea of opposition was at once abandoned.

Mr. Chimpainter's notions on matrimony differed materially from those of his wife, who combined with the *excelsior* principle the *sine quâ non* that a bride should always be submitted to her for approval, otherwise, she prophesied evil concerning the couple's prospect of happiness ; in fact, prophecy was a gift or accomplishment on which she rather prided herself ; and although—like most other prophets, both ancient and modern—she was seldom right, she never lost faith in herself, and continued to prophesy whenever an opportunity occurred.

Her husband, on the other hand, held the opinion that one woman was nearly as good as another for matrimonial purposes, provided always that the pair should be of suitable age, and devotedly attached to each other ; if the man were worth anything, he would naturally form the woman's

character, and as her beauty gradually faded with age, or appeared to him less attractive than that of other women, simply by reason of long possession, he would continue to cherish her for the sake of virtue and morality, and from a determination to avoid giving pain to one whom he had sworn to love and honour during existence. Wedded happiness Mr. Chim-painter considered to depend solely on the husband's will ; and whenever he heard of a divorce, he always set it down as the fault of the husband, either in not having made sufficiently certain before marriage of being in perfect possession of the woman's affections, or else in failing to retain them, through neglect or want of tact.

Under the circumstances, Mrs. Chim-painter did not feel a special yearning for her son's habitation to be in close proximity to her own ; but she expressed a wish that Herbert would not settle right away from her on the other side of London. He for his part had no desire, by remaining

in Thamwell, to associate constantly with people who had known him from boyhood, and who would consequently feel and exercise the right to take an almost parental interest in his wife, in himself, and in all his affairs. He was a thorough sceptic in the interest which his mother so frequently told him all her "old friends," and "very old friends," took in his welfare: when she informed him—as she frequently did just before his marriage—that Mrs. Smith, or Mrs. Jones, had called, "and inquired very kindly after him, and asked such a number of questions about the future Mrs. Herbert," attributing their solicitude to pure curiosity he did not evince that pleasure or gratitude which Mrs. Chimpainter deemed appropriate; as he cared not a solitary rap—spirit or otherwise—about either Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones, he did not expect those ladies to take any interest in any of his affairs, except such as might be considered partial or unqualified misfortunes; and he concluded—rightly or wrongly—that they

opined his coming marriage to be not exactly what his mother could have wished, and hence their "kind inquiries, and their number of questions."

All things considered, the columbaries of Clapton seemed as pleasant a set of habitations to choose from as could be found within a tolerably easy ride from Thamwell, and at a not too great distance from the city; hither Mrs. Chimpainter could drive occasionally, when a friend assisted her inclinations by offering her the loan of a carriage for the day; and yet it was sufficiently far from the parental nest to ensure that the maternal visitations would not be unpleasantly frequent. Looking upon bridal tours as a most ridiculous conventional luxury, for people who have their daily bread to earn, Herbert decided on taking his first trip when, the novelty of marriage having somewhat worn off, it would be more excusable to require some distraction.

The ceremony complete—priest, pew-opener, sexton, and coachman, having

received their respective tips—the bridegroom took his newly-made bride to his prim domicile—with its brand-new furniture smelling of French polish—feeling as most men do, under similar circumstances; having arrived at what he had looked upon as the zenith of happiness, he now reclined in an elegant arm-chair in the bright drawing-room—containing rather more than a comfortable amount of light, what with its white paper, its light-coloured paint, and its white curtains—tired and bored with the excitement, the ceremony, and the general circumstances, thinking how much of its attractiveness the *summum bonum* seems to lose when once attained: he had secured the woman he would have risked everything to possess; there she sat facing him, more beautiful than ever in her perfectly fitting bridal dress—also rather tired, but contented and thoroughly happy, perhaps because incapable of that exhaustive self-analysis which occupied her husband. With his forehead resting on his hand, he kept ask-

ing himself, "Will my feelings be always the same towards her as they have hitherto been?—will she continue to look upon me as the one bright star of her existence? or will she after a time grow indifferent?" He felt somewhat as a child does, at having after long scheming and contriving consummated the purchase of a new toy which he has seen in a shop-window, and yearned for with all his little soul,—a tin sword, for instance, in its bright, decorated scabbard: he takes it home, unsheathes it and sheathes it several times, makes cuts and thrusts at an imaginary enemy, hangs it at his waist, and at length throws it aside, wondering how he could have ever been so foolish as to waste his money and his desires on such an impracticable article. So with Herbert—now that he had acquired the great object of his wishes, he was almost surprised to find that it did not give him more pleasure; but then he thought perhaps he had not become sufficiently used to it, so that his feelings could not proceed from weariness of the plaything; then

again, towards the close of the day, he knew that he felt less pleasure in existence than in the morning, soon after the renewing processes of sleeping and feeding; and that on the morrow he might experience intense delight in the mere contemplation of his pretty partner. Noting his unenthusiastic state of mind, it occurred to him that a wife—like many inanimate things—may gradually take a firmer and firmer hold on the affections, till she at length becomes absolutely indispensable.

Entirely losing sight of the fact that their silence—from whatever cause—had been thoroughly reciprocal, Lydia looked up at her husband, and seeing his moody preoccupation, she walked hurriedly across the room to him, and stooping over him, said, with the unreasonable illogicality without which female charms would probably be incomplete, “Why, Herbert, what’s the matter? You’re very dull,—you’ve hardly spoken a word to me since we came home. You’re not tired of me?—you’re not sorry you’ve married me, are you?”

Taking her hand, he gently drew her down into a chair beside him, and slightly rousing himself, he said laughingly, "Of course not, you little goose; why, I haven't had time to grow tired of you."

"No; but perhaps you will when you have had time," said Lydia tearfully.

"You silly little thing," said Herbert, smoothing her delicately-tinted cheek with the back of his hand, "why should you think so?"

"Well, you're so glum, and you don't speak to me, or take any notice of me."

"I might say the same of you," returned Herbert; "no, the fact is that a day spent in doing anything—however apparently light, and pleasant, and easy—different from one's ordinary routine of work and amusement, tires one horribly."

"So it does," said Lydia, at once struck by the truth of the remark; "I suppose that's the reason why I feel so dreadfully tired," and she yawned powerfully; "I shall be very glad when its bedtime."

I shall have such a lot to see to, and arrange to-morrow."

"Yes, you see all day we've been doing what we're not used to,—first, there's dressing oneself with extra grandeur; then there's going to church, and getting married—well, that's a great bore; and——"

"Oh, Herbert!" interrupted Lydia.

"No, no, you misunderstand me; I don't mean that getting married is a great bore, but the ceremony. First you've got to wait about in the mouldy vestry for the parson, then you're marshalled in a sort of irregular procession up to the altar, then you're put in position, then you feel for the ring, then the parson begins reading something that you only listen to in order that you may put the answers in at the right place. Why can't they let you merely sign the book, without all that fuss and bother?"

"Oh, I think it's a beautiful service!" said Lydia enthusiastically; "an event which happens only once in your lifetime

ought to be made as impressive as possible, I think : don't you ? ”

“ Well, I don't know ; a man doesn't marry till he's thoroughly made up his mind ; if he had to sign a book before witnesses I think it would answer every purpose.”

“ Oh, I don't ! You wouldn't get me to be married in such a beggarly way, I can tell you ! ” said Lydia, with defiant archness. “ I don't profess to be very religious, but I would go to church to be married, if I never went at any other time.”

“ Very good, mum,” said Herbert, “ you're quite welcome : I look upon the religious ceremony as a mere remnant of that priestly ascendancy which instituted religious ceremonies on the smallest possible pretence. Education renders useless ceremonies impossible : a century hence, if you want to be married, perhaps you won't have to go to church.”

“ I'm not likely to live so long, Mr. Prophet, and I'm sure I've no wish to.”

“ There I quite agree with you ; at a

hundred, life must be much more trouble than it's worth; in fact, I often fancy it is so even at my present somewhat immature age, although my teeth are pretty good: but what good to himself is a man who's lost nearly all his teeth?"

"Artificial ones are very cheap."

"Horrible! Fancy taking your teeth out every night,—almost as bad as having to sleep without your entrails!"

"Oh you nasty fellow!" said Lydia, smacking him on the shoulder.

"Well, then there's the wedding breakfast," continued Herbert, slightly laughing—"a most arduous undertaking: people make speeches about you, and you have to make speeches about yourself, and you eat things you're not used to, and——"

"Why, to hear you talk, you'd be taken for one of those people who study every morsel they eat and drink, even when they're quite well, so that they may live to the latest possible minute."

"No, I haven't that object in view at

all; I don't consider immortality to be a boon, by any means."

"No, not the immortality of the body; but the immortality of the soul?"

"Ah! yes," said Herbert musingly; "a thing that no one knows anything about, so well-bred people have tacitly agreed never to mention it, rewarding themselves for their self-denial by allowing their priests to mention it to them once a week."

"You're so hard on well-bred people, that one would think you didn't belong to the class!" said Lydia laughingly.

"Perhaps I'm not sufficiently well-bred to have any sympathy," said Herbert.

"Perhaps not; but talking of sympathy, didn't I sympathise with that moselle? I am so fond of champagne!"

"Yes, ladies generally are; but for my part I'm rather suspicious of it; they make it out of anything now,—cider, gooseberries, and even petroleum."

"Ah! but they can't imitate the delicate flavour of the moselle."

“That’s always artificial ; the fine muscatel bouquet is added after the wine is made.”

“You don’t say so !” said Lydia, pulling a long face ; “everything will be artificial soon,—butter, cheese, milk, sausages : why, presently they’ll make the meat artificially !”

“That’s just what my father wants to make them do.”

“Yes, I know ; but you surprise me about the moselle.”

“Very likely. As for me, I’ve come to the conclusion that I’d as soon drink a glass of good home-made ginger, as the best wine that’s imported.”

“Oh, Herbert ! why even Dick Blacklock despised British wines.”

“Of course ; he’d sooner have had cheap port, made out of cider, elderberry juice, and logwood. People fancy that all foreign wines are made from the grape ; they haven’t even palate enough to find out that cheap sauterne is rhubarb juice.”

“In fact, the world’s a hollow mockery,

and we ought all to turn monks and nuns : that's a pretty conclusion to come to on your wedding day ! ”

“ No, no, that's always my way ; if the world is a hollow mockery, I'm tolerably contented to accept it as such. You mustn't take any notice of me,” said Herbert, putting his arm round her waist and kissing her ; “ in a day or two I'll invite my very particular chum Percy Goldripp to dinner ; he's almost as lively as you are ; and we'll have some moselle, eh ? and be jolly.”

“ Oh yes, and use the best dinner service and the saucer glasses your mother gave us. Percy Goldripp,—what a funny name ! ”

“ He's a nice fellow, though—quite a lady-killer ; a little too gay, I think ; you'll promise not to fall in love with him ? ”

“ Oh yes ! I'll promise,” said Lydia, musingly. “ Too gay ! I don't think men have any more right to be too gay than women have.”

“Why, you’re quite a supporter of woman’s rights.”

“No, I merely deny the right of men to do wrong.”

“Never mind, I think you’ll like him,” said Herbert.

CHAPTER XIV

UNAPPRECIATED WEALTH.

A FEW days after the wedding, at about half-past two in the afternoon, a young man, aged about forty-two, was walking round Spitalfields market, peering curiously at the houses, as though seeking for some particular one.

His florid, bronzed, hairless face set off by a white blue-spotted silk handkerchief worn round his neck, looked something like that of a bloated Red Indian given to drink. With his paunch removed, he would have been a small man; and in fact his corpulence looked as if it were due rather to art than to nature, so suddenly did it jut out from his otherwise spare frame.

At length he stopped before Mr. Dum-

lin's coffee-shop, thoroughly examined its exterior, and then entered.

This was Mr. James Masham, brother to Mrs. Dumlin. The place had not much altered since he last saw it, but somehow it seemed to look strange after an absence of about twenty years.

Walking through the public room into the back parlour, he stood confronting his sister, who was just going to give him a welcome the reverse of cordial, when a slight twitch of the mouth revealed her long-lost brother.

"Why, Jemmy!"

"What, Betsy, old gal—why, you didn't know your own brother!" and the two shook hands heartily.

"No, I shouldn't think as how I did, when he's got a corporation on him like a alderman."

"Well, now you comes to mention it, I ain't quite so slim and genteel like as I were when I went away."

"Why, whatever have you been a-doing to yourself to put on such a lot of

flesh? you ain't much of a skelington now."

"Well, you see it's this way: a fellow goes out of training, and one says, 'Come and have a drop, Jem,' and another says, 'Come and have a drop;' well, what with always having drops, and me being so strict before, you see it takes more effect on a fellow; and what's the consequence?—why, he runs to seed, in course."

"Yes, I suppose he do," said Mrs. Dumlin, who had never thought on the subject before. "There's some one a-setting over there as you don't know—Mr. Dick Blacklock, as married your niece Susan."

"And he ain't much good on't," she thought, but as she did not say so, Mr. Masham took a step towards his newly-found relative, and shook hands with him.

"Glad to make your acquaintance," grunted Mr. Masham.

"Same to you, and many on 'em," said Mr. Blacklock, with cordiality.

"Well, Betsy, old gal, and how are you

all this long time?" said Mr. Masham heartily, surveying the rounded outlines of his sister's form. "I don't think you're lost much flesh neither; you ain't got no thinner. But where's Willum, and all the kids, and little Lyddy?"

"Oh! they're all right; there ain't nothing never the matter with them. Willum and the boys was here about a half-hour ago, or it might be a hour for that matter, and Susan won't be long before she's here: she've gone to buy herself a new bonnet, she have; and little Lyddy,—what do you think little Lyddy's been and gone and done?"

"Not gone wrong?" said Mr. Masham in alarm, at once abandoning the idea on noticing Mrs. Dumlin's beaming face.

"Gone wrong? no, she's the best gal as ever breathed, and as gay as a lark; no, she ain't gone wrong, she's gone and got married."

"Married, eh?"

"Yes, to a real gennelman—such a nice

young fellow; and they've gone to live in such a sweet little house at Clapton!"

"Have they, though? Well, I'm uncommon glad to hear it—uncommon glad, I am."

"Yes, so am I; but how is it you never wrote to no one all this long time?"

"Well, the fact is, old gal, for the last eight or nine years we've been a-living from hand to mouth like."

"Ah! I thought as much," said Mrs. Dumlin, with a shake of her head.

"Yes," continued the ex-champion of the light weights, "the first ten or eleven year we done pretty well, got pardners in a sheep run, and made a little money, or a goodish bit I might say in a manner of speaking; well, then he got a touch of the old complaint, and——"

"What, the gout?"

"No, betting and gambling, for they've got race-horses even out there; and very soon he gets stumped—regler cleaned out. Well, then we goes to the Diggins, and makes nothing—leastways nothing to

speaking on; then we goes to Sydney, and we opens a sort of a hotel, but we didn't do nothing there,—cos why? he gambled it away as soon as he made it. Well, to make a long story short, about two year ago we goes to the Diggins agin, and makes barely enough to keep us, till about eight months ago we hits upon the wery identical spot as we'd been wanting all along. No more washing for little bits o' metal about as big as a fly's eye-tooth; we picks it up in lumps like this,—look here, old gal!"—and he took from his pocket a nugget about as large as a cob-nut.

"And that's what they makes sovereigns of, is it?" asked Mrs. Dumlin innocently, as she turned it over in her hand.

"Yes, only that's a deal better gold than they make sovereigns of."

"Is it, now? I shouldn't have thought it."

"It is, though: you may keep that bit if you like: make a brooch or a something or other."

"Thank you, Jemmy," said Mrs. Dumlin, "and I'll wear it as a keepsake."

Mr. Blacklock, who had been sitting quietly listening to the conversation, pricked up his ears when the nugget was produced. "You ain't got another little bit like that about you, have you?" he said carelessly: "I shouldn't mind having a ring made out of it as a keepsake."

"No, I ain't," replied Mr. Masham; "that's all I brought home in the rough. Well, Mr. Beauchamp he goes nearly mad over it. 'Jemmy,' he keeps on saying to me, 'we shall come to something presently,' he says; 'this ain't nothing,' he says. Well, sure enough we did come to something presently; for three days arter we come to the nuggets, we finds one of the biggest lumps o' solid gold as has ever been found, with just a little bit o' quartz stuck on to it about as big as a half-slice o' toast.

"Lor a mussy! you don't say so!" said Mrs. Dumlin, raising her hands.

"I do though, and the next day we finds another, only a trifle smaller, and nuggets all the time as plentiful as hazel

nuts in a good year, and almost as big."

"Oh Goodness gracious! why, Aladdin was a fool to it!" said Mrs. Dumlin enthusiastically.

"Well, we sells our place, and we goes to Sydney, and we shares thirty-six thousand quid atween us: that's what I calls business."

"I should rather think it were!" said Mr. Blacklock, opening his eyes to their full extent.

"Why, Jemmy, you're as rich as a Jew—as rich as the one the Jews out of Petticoat Lane is so fond of bragging about: what's his name?"

"Rothschild, do you mean?" asked Mr. Masham.

"Yes, that's him."

"Ah! I might be perhaps in a hundred year or so, if I took care on it. Well, when we gets to Sydney, Mr. Beauchamp he goes on like mad, till one morning when he were very seedy, and ill, and penitent like, and thinking of his little gal, and

home and that like, I makes him go to the bank and send all his money—'ceptin just about enough to take him home—to his old family lawyers, for them to pay over to little Lyddy."

"Well, and ain't he never a-coming home to see her?" asked Mrs. Dumlin.

"Never no more, Betsy; he've gone to his home, he have," said Mr. Masham solemnly.

"Dead?"

"He is so: that same evening as he banked his money, he gets blind drunk at a gambling shop, and I takes him home to bed, and next day he has D. T., and it weren't the first time, mind you; well, it were frightful hot weather, and he never rallies,—he gets wus and wus, and his last words to me was, 'Jem, see after the little gal;' and I will too, s' help me God!"

"Poor fellow! what a pity! Just as he were a-coming home, too!" said Mrs. Dumlin in a tone of deep compassion.

At the close of Mr. Masham's narrative, Mr. Blacklock, who had been listening

with his ears, eyes, and mouth wide open, closed the latter with the air of a man who comes to an important determination.

When Lydia received the news of her father's death, she went into deep mourning, and exhibited that decent amount of grief which would be naturally expected of her; though if her mind had been sufficiently analytical, she would have probably found that her tears were due rather to what she knew to be usual, than to real sorrow for the death of a man, who to all intents and purposes must be really less dear to her than old Mr. Dumlin, whom she had looked upon as a father for so many years.

Rationally considered, Lydia's actual grief should have hardly exceeded that of a well-bred young turtle, who has the remains of his parents pointed out to him in a basin of soup: being an animal of much higher development than the turtle, with warmer affections and more sentiment, she certainly did think of her dead father with some amount of yearning; and the fact of his being just on the point of re-

turning home to claim her, combined with his having so lavishly provided for her, procured for him a certain amount of posthumous filial love, which, however, the intensity of her feelings for Herbert soon neutralised. In another way the acquisition of the money affected her about as much as the loss of her relative: she was of course pleased to find herself possessed of several thousand pounds, but having no definite idea as to its employment, it could hardly be expected to add much to her happiness; in fact, she would have found considerable difficulty in naming any one thing, or set of things, which would have made her more exuberantly joyful. A woman who has made an early love-match without its usual accompaniment of being obliged to put up with poorer circumstances than those to which she has been accustomed, ought certainly to be the most ecstatically happy of developed beings.

In course of time her almost unalloyed bliss would naturally become a sort of annoyance, and she might even long for

her husband to ill-use her, in order that she might have the pleasure of making it up with him; but now he was all in all to her, and she had no use for the money. Perhaps in a year or two, as conjugal love grew rather cooler, she might desire to launch out into heavy expenditure for a large house and handsome furniture, in order to eclipse some stuck-up friend and neighbour; but for the present the contemplation of its safe investment was a sufficient enjoyment of it, and she felt that she should not even care to draw the interest.

Herbert, too, was only very slightly elated at his wife's accession to wealth. With him happiness consisted chiefly in repose; he was too contented to be thoroughly happy. Most men covet some particular mode of life, which would require an income considerably larger than they possess. Even the millionaire, who can buy up third-rate kingdoms with a stroke of his pen, no doubt has this yearning, and if he have not, he is the more unhappy. Herbert

hated to undergo the inconvenience of a change, even if it was certain to result in an improvement; for instance, with less than half or a quarter of his wife's fortune he might have established himself in a first-rate position as a shipbroker on his own account; but—not from any fear of losing the money—he preferred remaining with his old employers, much as a clerk in the Civil Service might like to retain his old seat even after the stipend had ceased to be an object to him, simply from his inability to devise any pleasanter way of certainly employing himself between the hours of ten, or eleven, and four.

Had he so chosen, he might have discontinued business altogether, living on his own small income and the interest of his wife's money; but having only one hobby—old books—he feared the *ennui* likely to be produced by insufficient employment.

It was his idiosyncrasy to shrink from all responsibility, even to the extent of converting into a fern-case his aquarium,

because he disliked being at the trouble of cleaning it out often enough, and felt uncomfortable at seeing the fish die in consequence; thoroughly appreciating the pain which ferns were likely to feel from want of water, he kept them watered with tolerable regularity,—a much less unpleasant task than periodically removing the filth from the bottom of a fish-tank. Loving his pretty wife with all the quiet devotedness of his disposition, and being perfectly satisfied with the amusement to be derived from piles of mouldy books, the money troubled him but little.

CHAPTER XV.

UNEARTHED.

ON the morning of the third day after Lydia became aware of being proprietress of the heap of sovereigns which added so little to her already overflowing happiness, she stood at the prim, white-curtained front window of her pretty little house, watering her beautiful pelargoniums, and noting the rapid unfolding of the fronds in Herbert's fern-case; snipping off here and there a shabby leaf or blossom, vaguely toying with them as a woman loves to toy with anything exquisite.

Herbert had started for the City about an hour since, and she had to perform a few light duties, amuse herself, and count the hours till his return; he was doubtless wise in his decision to continue his

daily business, for nothing seems to blunt the fine edge of love so much as the constant presence of its object. Had he remained always at home, his wife would have been deprived of the sweet pleasure of looking forward to his return.

Presently, without looking up from her plants, she saw Mr. Richard Blacklock walking leisurely up her clean white steps, fouling them, by the way, with his not over clean boots.

Having always felt an instinctive dislike for this gentleman, she went on tending her flowers as though she had not seen him, fearing lest she should fall in the eyes of her neighbours if he should catch her eye and nod to her, as he certainly would have done in his jauntiest manner. Dressed in a rather seedy brown shooting-coat, trousers fitting so closely to the leg, and so stretched at the knee, that they looked as though he must either sleep in them, or have them sewn on every morning, a waistcoat buttoning nearly up to the chin, and a figured blue tie, unsur-

mounted by shirt collar, he looked very much unlike a man with whom the tenant of Chaucer Villa, Upper Clapton, would wish to claim a nodding acquaintance.

Whistling "The Jolly Young Waterman," with great apparent enjoyment, and a thorough mastery of all its intricacies, he slouched up the five clean steps which led to the front door with the air of one who feels confident of being well received.

Mr. Blacklock stood close to the door when the neat, light-print-befrocked servant opened it. He kept her waiting while he performed the final two bars of Dibdin's immortal air, and then assuming his most engaging smile, he said, "Is Mrs. Chimpainter at home, my dear?—but I know she is, 'cos I seed her at the window."

He was a good-looking dark man, especially when he grinned and showed his regular white teeth, and the servant—a blonde young woman, with few opportunities of converse with handsome men—of course admired him.

"What might you want with her?" she asked with a pleased look.

"That ain't of no consequence whatsumdever, Mary my dear: your name is Mary, ain't it?"

"Yes," said the girl, looking down and half laughing: "how did you know that?"

"Never you mind, Mary, how I come to know it. You be careful of that baker as I see a-coming away just now; he's got a eye on you," said Mr. Blacklock, chucking her under the chin.

"Adone!" said the girl, giggling and blushing.

"Well, look here, Mary, just tell your missis as how a gentleman wants to see her—Mr. Dick Blacklock, say: she'll know," he added, as the girl eyed him with surprise. "You do as I tell you, Mary; I'm a sort of a friend of the family; it's all right."

Lydia had heard every word that passed, and was not best pleased when the servant delivered her message. Without

turning away from the window she merely said, "Ask him in."

Without troubling to wipe his boots on the mat, he walked heavily into the room, leaving his marks on the clean light-coloured crumb-cloth, advanced a step or two towards Lydia, and then went back to shut the door. Then observing the mud which he had left on the floor, and feeling rather abashed before Lydia, looking so beautiful in her becoming morning wrapper, he sat down on the chair nearest to him, unasked, and swung his hat about.

Lydia turned towards him, and said, "Good morning!" rather stiffly.

"Morning, Lyddy, morning!" said Mr. Blacklock, recovering his assurance; "pretty little place you've got, and no mistake; and you're looking first rate—first rate, you are."

"I'm very well, thank you," said Lydia, unbending a little: "how are the old people?"

"Oh, they're right enough; there ain't

never nothing the matter with them, 'ceptin' it is they eats too much sometimes."

Lydia merely smiled, and waited to learn the cause of Mr. Blacklock's visit.

At length, while attentively studying the carving of the table legs, and carefully smoothing his rather shabby stovepipe hat on his coat-sleeve, he said, with an effort,—

"That's a tidy lump of money as you've come into, I hear."

"Yes, a great deal more than I've any use for at present," said Lydia, indifferently.

"That's just what I says to Eph the other day: 'She don't care for money,' I says, 'Lyd don't,' I says," remarked Mr. Blacklock, with great candour.

"I hope Eph and the other boys are quite well," said Lydia, rising, by no means desirous of prolonging the interview.

"Oh, they're all right; leastways, Harry ain't quite the thing,—ate too much Yorkshire pudding the other day; never see such a fellow,—never knows when he's had enough."

"Yes, he is rather a glutton," said Lydia, advancing towards Mr. Blacklock, evidently expecting him to take his leave.

Holding his shabby hat by the brim, and swinging it about, first parallel to his feet and then at right-angles to them, watching the accuracy of the performance with something between interest and absence of mind. Mr. Blacklock apparently wanted to say something which his extreme delicacy of mind hindered him from uttering, without employing a certain amount of periphrasis.

"You must really excuse me," said Lydia, "I've several little things to do this morning: shall I send you up some bread and cheese and ale, or a glass of wine?"

"No, thank you, I'd rather not,—had a drop just afore I came in," replied Mr. Blacklock, his embarrassment increased by the offer of refreshment.

"Well, then I must say good morning," said Lydia, holding out her hand.

"Don't be in a such a blessed hurry,

Lydia; why, I ain't seen you —— well, it seems a long time, though it ain't."

"Why, you've grown quite affectionate all of a sudden!" said Lydia, smiling in spite of herself; and then remembering that he might want to beg or borrow a small sum of her, and thinking it better to get over the ceremony of purse opening without further parley, she added, "Is there anything you want to ask me?"

"Well," he said, swinging his hat in rather faster time, "you said as how the money you come in for was a good deal more 'n you wanted, didn't you?"

"Yes," replied Lydia, hesitatingly; "that is, I've no immediate use for it."

"Well, I have."

"Yes, I've no doubt you could very soon use it; I don't think you'd keep it long," said Lydia, beginning to feel not quite at her ease.

"Well, I've been a-thinking whether you mightn't like to make me a present of say five hundred," timidly suggested Mr. Blacklock, with his eyes fixed on the floor.

"Five hundred!" said Lydia, severely: "I really don't see what claim you have. I intend to make Mr. and Mrs. Dumlin a handsome present, of course, and I don't mind giving you a pound or two if you need it; but mind, I can't go on repeating it."

"That won't do, Lyd; I must have five hundred; nothing less is any good to me," said Mr. Blacklock, standing up, and at last facing Lydia with a determined look.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lydia angrily: "what do you mean? Why should I give you five hundred, I should like to know?"

"I'll tell you," said Mr. Blacklock, going close to her, and bending his head down as if to whisper.

Lydia seemed seized by a sudden dread; fixing her eyes on Dick Blacklock with a stony stare, she nevertheless looked as though she wished to shut out the sight of him.

Advancing a half-step or two as she retreated, he put his mouth close to her delicately beautiful ear, and said something in a hoarse whisper.

Without taking her gaze off him, she sank back into a chair, and with her elbow on its arm and her now pale cheek resting on her hand, she said in a low husky voice, "Then this is what you came for?"

"It is so, Lyd: there, don't take on so—I wouldn't harm you—I was always fond of you; but I want the money badly—you don't know how badly I want it: and what's more I must have it, there's no two ways about it. You won't miss it," he added, coaxingly.

"Miss it!" she said, with bitter emphasis: "if I gave it you without being able to tell my husband the reason why, I might just as well let you do your worst."

"Nonsense, Lyddy, don't go and flurry yourself; you've only got to say I'm a very old friend—a sort of relation, in point of fact; been unfortunate, want to set me up in business; something of that sort, don't you know. Why, I'll bet a fiver he'd never ask no questions: you can twist him round your finger if you like, I'll back. I don't want it, leastways I

can do without it, till, say this day week. I'll leave you to think it over a bit: but mind, Lyd, I'm bound to have it and no fiddle; so when I call you'll have it ready for me, won't you? "

"Leave me now, and I'll see what can be done," said Lydia, looking gloomily into space.

"All right: good-bye, Lyd," and with an awkward swing of his hat Mr. Blacklock turned and slouched, out of the room.

There, where he left her, she sat for hours motionless, differing from the bright, joyous, beautiful girl she had been before his visit, as much as a collected butterfly differs from the radiant being hovering over flower-blossoms, the pain of whose wanton impalement is probably longer than its blissful existence.

Lydia's intense happiness had indeed been brief; fond as she had become of Herbert, she never expected to marry him, and she had felt gloomy anticipations of the time when he should quit her, and the memory of their companionship would

merely be a bright oasis in her—till then—colourless life.

Then, when he actually offered her marriage, she hesitated, and indeed refused him; there was one dark spot in her history which he might by some unlucky chance discover; and to lose his love after being actually united to him would be worse than to have separated from him; but the temptation of the happiness held out to her had been too great to resist, and her short wedded life had been so enchanting that she had almost forgotten the remote possibility of its being interfered with. Least of all did she imagine that Dick Blacklock could blast her for ever by a word. With that unreasoning superstition which seems to somewhat influence all women, she had often told herself that such happiness must be too great to last, and now her prophecy had come true.

At length the time drew near for Herbert to come home from the City, and she dreaded to see him: had the money been

in her own keeping, the difficulty would be much less, but now she must put the matter formally to him, and have the stock sold out, or whatever else might be necessary. Determining not to mention the subject till the following day at the earliest, she went upstairs to dress; in the glass she saw a face which looked perceptibly longer and older than it did in the morning, and even cold water failed to cause any marked improvement.

Herbert came home radiant, having purchased at a sale a rare edition of "Quarles' Emblems," much discoloured, and possessing that delicately mouldy odour, which fashion may perhaps some day bring into vogue as a scent for the pocket-handkerchief more agreeable than the too powerful patchouli. Not noticing any signs of Lydia's emotion—being, in fact, so full of his delicious bargain—he kissed his pretty wife almost without looking at her, and proceeded to turn over the leaves of the precious volumes for her admiration.

Being a not less apt dissembler than the generality of her sex, she wreathed her face in smiles, and tried to admire the plates.

"These prints are very fine, and I picked them up dirt cheap," said Herbert, studying the pictures affectionately, while Lydia, with her hand resting on his shoulder, looked over them with him.

"Yes, I daresay they were thought a good deal of when they first came out, but now I suppose they're only admired because they're old."

"Oh! they're beautifully executed: just look at this one."

"Yes, it's very good, but I think this sort of thing has improved very much; the cuts in the cheap magazines are much better than these—at all events, they're more pleasing."

"Yes, I've no doubt ladies would think so," said Herbert tolerantly; "it's a totally different style of art; at the present day nearly all artists seem to aim at realism, to the entire exclusion of the ideal."

"Well, I think the nearer a picture approaches to reality the more we admire it; I always feel inclined to laugh at what I call the ideal. Look at the monuments in St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, with angels and cherubs doing all sorts of funny things, that they couldn't fairly be expected to do."

"Ah! yes, that style of thing is generally called allegorical: modern allegorical sculpture and pictures are, as a rule, very comical. There may be, and often is, as much realism about an allegorical painting as about any other; but you may idealize the most common-place subject."

"Well, I think I like the real best. If I look at the portrait of a table I like to know that it is a table, without seeing it described in a catalogue as 'an ideal table.'"

"Ah! I don't think you quite understand the question," said Herbert, rather nettled at being quizzed on such a subject by a woman.

"No, perhaps not," said Lydia; "I

never talked about anything ideal till to-day."

"Who do you think I've asked to dine with us to-morrow?" asked Herbert, brightening at the thought.

"Your mother, perhaps," replied Lydia, feeling quite unelated at the prospect.

"No, I don't think she'd amuse you; no, my old friend, Percy Goldripp, that you've heard me speak of. You will like him so,—he's so gay, so light-hearted, so amusing, and has the most contagious animal spirits of any man I ever met: such a perfect gentleman, too—at least, I think so. I'm very fond of him; he's really the only man whose company I care for: I feel sure you'll like him."

"Oh! of course, if you like him: love me, love my friend."

"I believe Percy would be liked anywhere for his own sake, and I'm going to be deprived of his society for nearly a year."

"Then you won't have a friend left?"

“No, I shall miss him dreadfully in the office; he’s going to Sydney on some very important business for the firm; he starts the day after to-morrow. We’ll give him a nice, snug little dinner, and some of the sparkling wine you’re so fond of.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEPTH OF MISERY.

ON the following morning Lydia found it inconvenient to approach the subject of the £500 before Herbert started for the City, so she decided on postponing all mention of it till the next day.

So many things had to be performed and superintended, for receiving the guest with honour befitting the occasion, that she found but little time for thinking of her grief; now and then, however, the spectre which she fondly hoped and believed had been laid for ever, forced itself into her thoughts, making her gloomy and melancholy.

Six o'clock was the dinner hour; at a quarter-past five everything except the food was on the table, and Lydia surveyed

the spotless cloth, the glass, the glittering plate, the flowers—and all that tends to soften the coarse reality of eating—with conscious pride. Having satisfied herself that everything was just as it should be, she went and sat on an ornamental cane chair in the drawing-room, and pretended to read an elaborately-bound book of poems, looking as though dinner was a thing which never troubled her till she had to eat it. Just as the hands of the white alabaster clock in the centre of the broad marble mantelpiece pointed to twenty-five minutes before six, Lydia heard the timid, hesitating sort of knock which characterized her husband. Thinking it hardly in accordance with the best manners to rush out and welcome him as usual, she remained seated, with that perfectly calm indifference which writers in cheap illustrated weekly papers had led her to look upon as one of the chief charms of the English aristocracy. Although it is perhaps hardly fair to give this as her only reason for refraining from running to greet

her lord, she had that innate dislike of embracing before a third person which distinguishes most well-bred people: Herbert was so uxorious that he would have been sure to forget this wholesome restraint.

Lydia rose from her seat as the neat housemaid threw open the drawing-room door; Herbert entered slightly in advance of his friend, and feeling a little uncertain as to the exactly proper form of words for an introduction, he said hurriedly, "Lyddy, this is my particular friend, Percy Goldripp."

Percy came into the room hidden by Herbert, who, as he finished speaking, moved aside to allow his friend to walk towards Lydia. Percy entered with his usual easy swing—a smile lighting up his handsome blonde features; the instant his eyes fell on Lydia, he stopped dead, as if struck by a bullet; he had seen her only once before, but hers was a face for which another could never be mistaken. With half-open mouth, his gaze seemed

riveted; drawing a painful breath, and putting one hand unconsciously to his forehead, he turned and left the room abruptly, as though the vision had been too horrible, snatched his hat from a peg in the hall, opened the outer door and hurried out, without even looking behind him.

Where she had risen to receive the guest, Lydia stood motionless, with a fixed horror-stricken expression, looking at the doorway through which he had vanished; she neither looked at Herbert, nor spoke to him, seeming like one from whom all hope has fled.

When Herbert sufficiently recovered to shape his surprise into words, he went up to her, took her gently by the arm, and said as he led her to a chair, "Why Lyddy, what's the matter?—there must be some mistake; Percy evidently fancies he's seen you before, and you seem disturbed."

Still looking straight before her, she said, as though addressing a third person :

"You'll hate me; I *have* seen him before, once,—once!"

"When?" asked Herbert timidly, having a sort of presentiment of evil.

In the same dreamy, gloomy way, Lydia replied, "A month or two before I knew you."

"How did you become acquainted with him?" said Herbert falteringly.

"I was walking up the Strand one summer evening, with another girl. She dropped her glove, and he picked it up; he got into conversation with us, and pressed her to go to the theatre with him; at last she consented, and I went too."

"Well, that was certainly very imprudent," said Herbert, brightening a little; "but——"

"That's not all," interrupted Lydia, with a sigh so despairing, that Herbert's heart sank within him. "Coming out, I lost sight of my friend; I was mad enough to go to supper with your friend, at a grand hotel somewhere; after supper I remember nothing till next morning, when

I found myself lying on a couch in the same room: that was the reason why I at first refused to marry you. I would have told you all, but it was beyond my strength." Slightly bending over her clasped hands, Lydia finished speaking without looking at her husband, in a passionate, utterly hopeless manner, as if in a dream.

"Oh, Lydia!—that I should have lived to hear this," said Herbert, with a cry of agony, as he strode out of the room.

The sight of the prettily-spread table in the parlour jarred upon his nerves like a false note.

He took his hat off the slab in the passage, where he had so lately thrown it, and went out, walking slowly, he cared not where, and brooding, brooding, till his mind was almost numb.

Insensibly he wandered in the direction of his father's house at Thamwell, about nine miles distant. When Herbert arrived there, it was a quarter-past ten. Mr. and Mrs. Chimpainter Senior, being early

risers, were in bed and asleep by ten o'clock. Seeing a light in the back-kitchen Herbert knocked, and was admitted by the cook; telling her not to disturb the household, he took a crust of bread off the supper tray, and went up to the room which was still called "Master Herbert's room;" partly undressing himself he lay down, and sank into a sound dreamless sleep.

Waking between half-past four and five o'clock, he dressed, and walked as far as Kingsland Gate; thence the omnibus carried him over the stones to the city. He breakfasted at a pastry-cook's, and reached the office rather before his usual time.

Although he knew it to be very unlikely that Percy would come to the City, Herbert somehow expected to see him. The ship lay off Dungeness, and Percy had to start by one of the first trains; it seemed almost better that they should not meet under the circumstances. Before he could return, Herbert would have left the firm, and the two friends might never meet again.

CHAPTER XVII.

ADVICE.

ALL day Herbert sat at his desk, doing mechanically such work as fell to his share, hardly speaking or moving. At five o'clock he left the office, and taking train for Thamwell arrived in time for six o'clock dinner. His mother was of course full of enquiries; but she could only extract from him the information that he wanted to have a quiet chat with "the governor" after dinner.

"Well Herbert," said Mr. Chimpainter, as soon as they were alone; "what's the matter? Something wrong with the wife I suppose, women are very troublesome, they want a deal of management; but I suppose we shouldn't like to do without

them. As a general rule, it's just the same as with horses, if they do any mischief, it's the driver's fault."

Herbert had eaten just what was set before him in a moody abstracted sort of way, but his father's plain, direct question roused him, and he said rather irritably: "I don't see how it could be my fault in this instance."

"I didn't say it was, my boy," said Mr. Chimpainter good-humouredly; "let's hear all about it; when man and wife fall out, it's a very serious matter," and he pushed the wine towards his son.

With his head resting on his hand, Herbert took no notice of the bottle. "I find she knew Percy Goldripp before I married her," he said, without looking up.

"Well, that may be unpleasant, but it's not altogether unpardonable," said Mr. Chimpainter, deprecatingly.

"He made her acquaintance one evening in the street, took her to the theatre, and she passed the night with him."

"Ah! I can quite understand your distress my boy," said Mr. Chimpainter gravely; "it's one of those mishaps which no man can foresee; how did you find it out?"

"You know Percy was coming to dine with me yesterday?"

"No, I didn't know it."

"No, of course not; well he came, and the moment he saw Lydia he started, and rushed out of the house, without saying a word; I learnt from Lydia what I've told you."

"That she passed the night with him?"

"Not exactly in those words, she said that she was walking with another girl who dropped a glove which Percy picked up; he began talking to them, and pressed them to go to the play with him, they consented; coming out Lydia was separated from her friend, and was foolish enough to let him take her somewhere to supper; after supper she remembers nothing till next morning, when she woke

up and found herself lying on a couch in the same room."

"Ah! that's a very different thing," said Mr. Chimpainter, quickly.

"How different?"

"Oh! very different, have you seen Percy since?"

"No, he was to start for Sydney to-day, and although I went to the office with a sort of half hope that I might see him, he didn't come, and I thought afterwards it was better we shouldn't meet."

"On the contrary, it was most important that you should meet, he might have been able to give a more innocent explanation of the matter than you seem to think possible."

"Impossible! there are the admitted facts. I left the house immediately, and came here, slept here, but ——"

"Yes, I know, but didn't you say anything more to your wife?"

"No, what could I say? What could she say?"

"Well I must say I think you've acted

hastily and unwisely. To leave a wife is a very serious thing. What do you intend to do? ”

“ Do? What can I do? ”

“ Well I doubt very much whether you could obtain a divorce if you tried. I believe the Court grants a decree when the woman is proved to have led an immoral life before marriage unknown to the husband, which as a question of abstract justice is, of course wrong, because the woman has no redress, however infamous her husband's prenuptial morals may have been ; but in your case, all that you have evidence of, is an act of indiscretion. I wouldn't try for a divorce in any case. You still love her? ”

“ Yes, I could never attach myself to another woman.”

“ Well then, it seems unreasonable to leave her. I admit that you have a right to feel hurt, because for unnumbered generations men have been bred up to feel hurt under such circumstances ; but in reality your wife has done you no wrong,

you've no right to the secrets of her life before you knew her."

"I consider that I have, and that she did me a great wrong in not telling me."

"Look here, Herbert, let us reverse the case, suppose in the presence of your wife you were suddenly confronted with a lady who had lived under your protection before your marriage, do you think your wife would run away from you?"

"Ah! that's a very different thing."

"No, it's exactly the same thing, only you've been in the habit of looking at it differently; besides your wife would have much more reason in the case I have supposed, because she only saw Percy on that one occasion, it was a mere accident that might happen to any woman, if she once permitted herself to speak to a stranger, which a girl brought up with such people as your wife's foster-parents, would be more apt to do, than one of the upper, or upper middle class."

"Nearly everyone would look at the matter as I do; and every one will know it."

“Yes if you’re stupid enough to let them.”

“I don’t see how I can help it.”

“They can only know out of your own mouth.”

“But the servants ? ”

“They know nothing ; if any of your neighbours are curious enough to insinuate any questions—founded on the servant’s report of your absence, invent something so elaborate that they may know it to be a lie, and yet not dare to tell you so.”

“Ah !” sighed Herbert, wearily, “a woman who’s once deceived me ——”

“But I don’t consider that she has deceived you ; if you love her, and she’s true to you after marriage, what more can you want. The more she loved you, the less likely would she be to tell you. You married rather too young, Herbert, or you’d have viewed the matter with more tolerance ; women are very much like men, they would often be libertines if they dare ; but really, in your wife’s case, however unpleasant it may be, a folly of that kind

before she even knew you, committed once only under peculiar circumstances, and no doubt, since bitterly repented of, should not, I think, entail lifelong unhappiness on one who is deeply attached to you, and with whom you have no other fault to find."

"Ah! it's sickening to think of," groaned Herbert.

"Nonsense boy, it's pure sentimentality, you feel intensely hurt because she didn't tell you all about it. I must say I don't blame her; the probabilities were that no one would be any the wiser, why should she run the risk of making both herself and you unhappy, for the sake of a mere idea? Why better men than you have married widows."

"Ah! that's a very different affair."

"Only in the matter of concealment. Man is the only animal who is so exacting about the antecedents of his partner, his gradually increasing conceit has caused him to become so. Before he acquired speech, he was naturally very much like

the other apes now are. If women ever make that much nearer approach to equality with man which a few of them so much desire, they will claim his license. Should they ever equal him they will soon become his superiors, in which case, man will either have to be strictly virtuous, while woman may do as she likes, or both sexes will become chaste. The latter consummation is of course the most unlikely ; our animal nature will always crop up, however much time may improve it."

"Ah! you're going a long way into the future," sighed Herbert, "the present governs my feelings."

"Why not rise superior to it? it's a matter of pure reason."

"What? live with a wife who's been too intimate with my own friend?"

"You don't know that she has been—that's why it would have been better to see Percy—and if she has been, it was before you had any claim on her. Now, you have the exclusive right to her, she acknowledges it, and wishes nothing

better than to act up to it; even supposing that she had been much more guilty, you couldn't expect her to love you, and be true to you before she knew you."

"No, but we expect absolute chastity from woman."

"Yes, you may expect; but you can't control a woman's actions, much less her thoughts; as I said before, women are very much like men. You feel quite satisfied that your wife loves you devotedly, and will continue to do so as long as you treat her properly. What more can you want?"

"I can't look at it as you do," said Herbert sadly, covering his face with his hands.

"Nonsense boy! I tell you, that you've no right to run away from your wife, under such circumstances, why—— come closer."

Herbert drew his chair closer to his father, and the old man whispered in his ear:—

"A year after my marriage, before you

were born, I discovered that your mother had had an intrigue when she was quite a girl, before I knew her. At first it affected me as it does you ; but I reasoned myself out of it as I've tried to reason with you, and to this day your mother feels sure of my ignorance, and you may be quite sure I should never have breathed it to you except as a means of consolation. After all, what's the use of poor animals like ourselves having acquired reason, if it doesn't make us tolerant to each other ? ”

Herbert was silent, he seemed to feel an increased affection for his father, after this tribute of utmost confidence, and it made no difference for the worse even in his sentiments towards his mother. At length with dry straining eyes, rising from his chair, he said, “ I'll try to forgive her,” and the two went into the drawing-room, to be unsuccessfully questioned by Mrs. Chimpainter about their long conference ; for neither father nor son possessed absolute confidence in her powers of retention ; and even if these had been in

the most perfect order, a homily on the evil effects arising from young men marrying ladies not specially selected by their parents, would have been inevitable. By a masterly, though not easy silence the infliction was avoided.

On the following morning after a good night's rest, Herbert rose up like a giant refreshed with wine of superior quality, and disposed to view things by a light different from that of the preceding evening, as much as daylight differs from gas-light. He felt more buoyant, more disposed to think that his wife might not be unworthy of his love; having been two nights and part of two days absent from her, he felt the truth of old sayings, such as "Absence endears," and "*Amantium iroe amoris integratio est,*" in their full force; the more he thought over his father's arguments, the more effect they had on him, and he went down to breakfast fully determined to be reconciled to his young wife.

He saw his father in the library for a

few minutes before starting for the city, and greatly pleased the old gentleman by telling him his decision.

Reaching the office before any one had arrived, he left a note saying that urgent private business would prevent his being there till the following morning. He hailed the first cab that presented itself and drove down to Clapton,—although he might have just as well gone by train, at about one sixth of the fare ; but under exceptional circumstances—most men and women seem to think it right to do exceptional things. At marriages and funerals for instance, people feel bound to ride to the scene of action in a carriage and pair, a mode of conveyance to which they are probably destined to be total strangers for the future. Herbert going to renew his marriage, could not be expected to travel by the ordinary method.

Discharging the cab at some little distance from the house, he gave his own peculiar knock, and waited anxiously for the patter of Lydia's little feet on the oil-

cloth ; after waiting a long minute in anxious suspense, the housemaid opened the door ; she seemed rather scared, and looked at her master as though he had no right to come there.

“ Isn’t Mrs. Chimpainter at home ? ” asked Herbert, as though he had not been out more than about half an hour.

“ No, sir,” replied the girl timidly ; “ she went out soon after you, and she hasn’t been back since, she didn’t say where she was going sir.”

“ Oh ! all right,” said Herbert, with as much indifference as he could assume ; “ I know where she is, we shall be back in an hour or so.” And he walked leisurely down the steps without looking behind him, but in spite of his tolerable acting he felt his heart give a great thump against the wall of its chamber, when he heard that Lydia had left the house so soon. He knew her sensitive nature, and high mettle ; there was no telling where she might not have gone ; she was much too proud to seek him, and it occurred to him that he might

never see her again ; there was only one place where he could look for her, and he felt almost reluctant to go there, for if that should fail, he would be like a ship without a rudder. Sauntering along in a reverie, at the corner of his road, he saw the four wheeled cab and bright chesnut horse which had brought him there, standing quietly outside a highly respectable looking public house ; he was just about to pull open the swing door in search of the driver, when that rather hardly, and often shabbily, treated member of society came out wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

“I want to go back again,” said Herbert.

“All right sir, I’m ready for yer ; I do like to drive a gennelman, I does ; you’d hardly believe it sir, but t’other night it were raining cats and dogs, it were, and a gennelman—he called hisself—hails me, as I was a passing a house ; puts two ladies inside, tells me drive them to a house about a ’arf a mile off, and runs along the pavement hisself under a um-

rella; well when we gets there, he hands out the ladies, and gets in hisself and tells me to drive back again, which I does; well he puts in two more ladies, and I drives 'em to the same place, and he runs alongside under his umbrella again, well they gets out and he hands me a bob.

“ ‘What’s this for?’ I says.

“ ‘Your fare,’ he says.

“ ‘How do you make that out?’ I says.

“ ‘Well you’ve come under a mile,’ he says.

“ ‘Wery likely,’ I says, ‘but ain’t I carried four of you; I want another shilling, sixpence for each hextra person.’

“ ‘No you don’t,’ he says, ‘you only had two at a time, and it’s all one job.’

“ ‘I shall summons you,’ I says, ‘and chance it.’

“ ‘So do,’ he says, ‘here’s my card.’ But I didn’t summons him : cos why? A gennelman as I drives into the City regler every morning; which he always gives me his noosepaper, he says, ‘Dont’t you do

As he neared the city his nervous excitement increased, and but for the pain which would have had to be inflicted on the horse, he would have urged the driver to make more haste. That worthy having narrated his wrongs to a not unsympathetic hearer, felt perhaps more forbearing even towards his equine fellow-creature in the shafts, or perhaps he was meditating on the biting sarcasms he might have passed on the economical "gentleman" who preferred trudging two half miles through the slush, and laying himself open to obloquy, rather than pay a shilling. In any case, the absence of the thong from his flanks, gave the horse as he jogged leisurely along that opportunity for calm reflection, which quadrupeds, no less than bipeds, sometimes require.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DESERTED.

FOR some hours after Herbert left the house on the unlucky day of Percy's visit, Lydia sat brooding, brooding, over the one indiscreet act which had just resulted in the perfect wreck of her whole life. The man who had sworn to love and cherish her, had left her without even a word of parting; in due time she would probably hear from his father or his solicitor, proposing a separation. That Herbert would at first feel deeply unhappy she did not doubt, but for a man there were occupations, and amusements, and even genteel vices, in which a woman wishing to keep even the remnants of a character dare not indulge. He might travel, or enjoy the pleasures of society, or even in course of

time marry again in all except the name ; but a woman separated from her husband, what could she do ? A widow in all but the title, she would be looked down upon—or worse still, pitied—even by the society from which she had been so lately raised. Could she ever sufficiently forget the man who had so utterly abandoned her, to tolerate the embraces of another lover, not only would she lay herself open to contempt and desertion, but the rather uncommon name of Chimpainter, would not improbably be bandied about in the divorce court coupled with that of a co-respondent. Like most women she believed in that much misapplied term “luck,” that certain things were bound to happen to certain people. The female mind seems incapable of appreciating the fact that man is able either to counteract, or prevent nearly every event that can happen, if only he knows beforehand that it is going to take place, and she cursed her luck which caused her to meet the stranger, and doubly cursed it for the

unlucky chance which made him a friend of Herbert's. As a woman, living under the laws which govern women, she could not altogether absolve herself from blame, but the dreadful punishment seemed too great for a sin which had been committed chiefly through thoughtlessness and high spirits. She thought over the girls of her own acquaintance whom she knew to have committed acts of more than indiscretion, and who had never reaped any punishment, and she stamped her foot with rage, more at being found out than at her own weakness in having allowed herself to be betrayed into the frailty which had resulted so fatally; for she did not materially differ from the majority of men and women who are kept virtuous mainly by the fear of consequences. But look at it in whatever light she would, there remained the fact that the one slight fault of entering into conversation with a stranger had been the direct cause of all the rest, and she felt, as women always will do under similar circumstances, that the

world is harder on them than the offence warrants, and the punishment greater than their strength can bear.

Towards seven o'clock she started from her chair with an exclamation of passionate grief, and went upstairs to put on her plainest dress and bonnet ; then without a word to the servants she left the house. Sentence had been passed on her, there was no appeal ; and even if there had been she would have never availed herself of it. Walking quickly towards town, so as if possible to drown reflection in rapid motion, she went straight to Mrs. Dumlin's.

That good lady had been elbowing her way about all day, and with the sleeves of her limp cotton dress still tucked up, she was indulging in a quiet spell at the newspaper ; undisturbed either by customers or by any of her numerous family.

A more than usually artistic murder had so fixed her attention that Lydia came close to the engrossing sheet before Mrs. Dumlin noticed her entrance.

"Why, Lyddy, who'd have thought of

seeing you?" said Mrs. Dumlin, letting the paper fall on her lap.

Lydia sank into a chair and rested her forehead on her hand, without speaking.

"Why, what's the matter, child?" said Mrs. Dumlin, rising from her chair and coming to lean over Lydia. "Is there anything the matter at home?"

"Everything's the matter," replied Lydia, without looking up, "and I've come back to live with you again, if you'll have me."

"Ah! Lyddy, Lyddy! I thought it were too good to last, I did," said Mrs. Dumlin, who held the usual superstition about the essentially limitable extent of human happiness.

"There was nothing to prevent it lasting but my cruel ill luck," said Lydia, in a weary way, as though she were worn out with repeatedly recounting the circumstances which led to her bereavement.

"Ah! that's just where it is, Lyddy; if the Almighty sees you've got too much

happiness, he thinks it ain't good for you, and takes it away from you according."

As Lydia made no remark on this very unpleasant habit of the Deity, Mrs. Dumlin seated herself beside her foster-daughter in an old Windsor chair. "What's it all about?" she asked, tenderly.

Then Lydia told her everything, including even Dick Blacklock's visit.

"Ah! I thought it couldn't be right if that fellow didn't have something to do with it," observed Mrs. Dumlin, with a vicious shake of the head.

"I don't think he could have told anyone, because he had something to gain by keeping it secret," said Lydia, drearily.

"Yes, but he's such a fool; when he happened to be drunk any time he'd have told anybody. I'll tell my brother Jem, and if he don't give him a licking, big as he is, it's a pity."

Lydia was too pre-occupied by the contemplation of her own troubles to pay

much attention to the possible injustice which might befall Mr. Blacklock, and she went up to her own room before any of the family should return to worry her with their questions.

All the next day Mrs. Dumlin was too much engaged with the business to see much of Lydia, who hardly stirred from her room.

CHAPTER XIX.

TOO STRONG TO BE BROKEN.

ON the following morning, at a time when all Spitalfielders had finished their breakfasts, and had not begun to take their dinners; old Willum and the boys being out at work, and Susan Blacklock *née* Dumlin, having gone out marketing, her husband not having been seen for several days, Herbert Chimpainter could not have chosen a better time for escaping the curious eyes of the Dumlin family and the Dumlin customers.

Having satisfied the confiding cabman, Herbert pushed open the swing doors and looked up and down the deserted boxes, as if expecting to find his wife taking her pint of weak coffee and thick bread and butter in one of them.

Mrs. Dumlin with her sleeves tucked up as usual, came forward to inspect the visitor.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" she said, rather coldly.

"Is Lydia here?" he asked, breathless with excitement.

"Yes, she is," replied Mrs. Dumlin, crossing her arms over her expansive bust.

With a great sigh of relief Herbert said timidly, "Will you tell her please, that I've come to take her home with me?"

"That's if she'll go; but I'll tell her, oh, I'll tell her," said Mrs. Dumlin, as she walked haughtily out of the room.

As Herbert stood looking at his anxious face in the chimney glass, which might have been taken for a sheet of bright tin in a maple frame, it occurred to him for the first time that Lydia's high spirit might rise up in rebellion against his desires.

Till Mrs. Dumlin had put the doubt

in his mind he had thought, "I've only to ask her and she'll return," but now, Mrs. Dumlin's words frightened him, and he felt far less confident.

When Lydia heard of her husband's arrival, the sense of the wrong he had done her increased fourfold; five minutes before he came, she would have hailed with delight the slightest prospect of reconciliation; but now, with mankind's universal tendency to encroachment, she felt something more than merely holding out the hand to be due to her.

Mrs. Dumlin advised that the interview should take place in the best room, so Herbert was shown into the over-furnished apartment in which he had proposed for Lydia's hand. He found her standing at the centre table, listless, with downcast eyes, and with an expression so different from what he remembered two days before, that the sight of her made his heart ache.

"Lydia," he said hesitatingly; "I've—
I've come to take you home with me."

He took the hand which hung by her side, and when he released it, it fell back into its former position; she neither looked up, nor spoke.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" he faltered.

Still she made no movement.

Herbert felt at a loss how to act; he had come prepared to forgive the deep injury which had been done to him, and he found himself put in the wrong, or could there be some further complication, and did his wife feel that forgiveness and reconciliation were impossible?

For a second or two he stood watching her look and attitude, which seemed to denote an apathetic but resolute sadness, and he felt almost certain that there must be some other dread circumstance, of which he was in ignorance.

"You'll come with me Lydia, won't you?" he said, gently placing his hand on her shoulder, "there's no reason why you should not, is there?"

"None!" she replied passionlessly,

with her eyes still cast down; "except that you left me without even a word of farewell, although since I've known you, I've been true to you in every thought; perhaps you might alter your mind again before long, and the pain of two partings might be too great for me."

Herbert's voice stuck in his throat, it was certainly a relief to find that there was no additional reason why they should not come together again, but to have his forgiveness—if not exactly thrown back at him—questioned, and the genuineness of it doubted, made him pause to ask himself whether he had been really aggrieved.

"I certainly didn't expect such a greeting as this, Lydia, after all I've suffered," he said with a sad, deprecating look.

"My sufferings are nothing, of course," returned Lydia, without looking up.

"Yes! but I thought that I had been deeply wronged, and most people would consider so."

"The only wrong I did you, was in not telling you of my misfortune, if my telling

you could have made any difference, you could not have loved me much."

"Yes, but the shock of the discovery was so sudden that——"

"So sudden that you could not bestow even a thought on me."

Herbert half opened his mouth to speak, but he knew not what to say; such a phase of the matter had not occurred to him as possible, he might in his irritation have given vent to very wounding words, so he was silent.

At length he said huskily: "Am I to go back as I came, Lydia?"

Still standing in the same position, she made no sign.

Herbert Chimpainter was not one to humble himself, under such circumstances, however much he might love; he had made such advances as would have seemed impossible, but for his father's lecture, more his pride forbade him to do. Slowly, and sorrowfully, he turned to go out, but before he could reach the door, Lydia sprang towards

him, and fell on his neck, kissing him, crying hysterically, and gently upbraiding him for intending to go away without her, till Herbert thought he had never loved her so much before. On arriving at their own pretty home at Clapton, they knocked at the door, and walked in as though nothing unusual had happened, and as they were not foolish enough to enter into any explanation, either to the servants, or to their neighbours, no one was any the wiser, much to the surprise, and almost to the disappointment of Lydia, for on the way home in the cab—which of course became necessary under such exceptional circumstances—she said after long reflection: “What can we tell the neighbours?”

“Tell them? tell them nothing that you don’t want them to know!” replied Herbert, who had been conning and elaborating the maxims laid down by his father on this subject.

“But they must know something about it.”

"Only as much as you choose to tell them ; tell them nothing."

"But I don't quite see how I can help it."

"I've always noticed that ladies never do help it, they'll tell their merest acquaintance something, that a moment's reflection would convince them they would wish at some future time had been kept entirely to themselves. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and I've come to the conclusion that it's right to preserve yourself from the curiosity of your neighbours, by the most carefully concocted romances that you can devise."

"I could refuse all information," suggested Lydia, with a woman's dislike to the perpetration of other than unpremeditated untruths.

"No, that would be very injudicious," said Herbert, "by refusing to be at the trouble of inventing, you set your neighbours to invent for you, an exercise in which each one tries to excel the other ; so I'll leave the matter to your discretion, I feel every confidence in your cleverness."

"You're very kind," said Lydia smiling, "but you seem to have a very low opinion of human nature."

"So I have, there's every reason to believe that it will become better—there's plenty of room for improvement. What I object to is, that people should think that we've so much to be proud of."

"Ah! but we have some good men, and women don't you think? Look at the immense amount of money they give away in charity."

"There's not necessarily any virtue in giving away money, it's generally a hobby, like my taste for old books; it's much more pleasurable to give away money that you can't use, than to keep it locked up. If a jackall finds a dead horse, he'll allow his brother jackalls to help him eat it, because he knows that he can't eat it all himself in the short time he proposes to stay in the neighbourhood."

"Yes, but some people give away money when they really can't afford it," said Lydia, eagerly.

"Yes, that's because they can't afford to do otherwise."

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, a struggling lawyer, doctor, or architect, subscribes to charities, that he may keep his name before the public, and so work up a connection."

"Then there's no merit in doing good actions."

"Certainly not, virtue pays best in the long run, philanthropists and 'good people' generally, are the most overrated set in existence, they like that sort of thing, and they are amply remunerated by the reputation they earn."

"Ah! but there are really some good men, I don't care what you say," said Lydia, defiantly. "I'm sure Mr. Dongman at our chapel was a thoroughly good man."

"Yes, of course, priests are paid to be good, it's part of their business, they—as it were—put a brass plate on their door, with 'virtue practised in all its branches,' engraved on it in neat bold type; but they

are becoming more purely ornamental every day."

"Ah! you mean the Ritualists."

"No, I mean that in the good old times—or perhaps it would be more correct to say, the bad old times—the priests acted as lawyers, doctors, and general advisers, to all the poor of the parish, but with the increase of wealth and prosperity, the poor can afford to pay for law and medicine, when they have a taste for those very expensive luxuries."

"Well, Mr. Dongman was a very good man, I'm sure; but he wasn't at all ornamental, for he was very ugly, oh! such an ugly man, and so common-looking, he was more like an ordinary working man."

"Yes, you see, they are nearly always drawn from a lower class than the priests of the establishment, and without a surplice they look less cherubic."

"Perhaps that may have something to do with it," said Lydia, pondering deeply, till she entered the home which she had abandoned the hope of ever seeing again.

CHAPTER XX.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

WHEN Percy Goldripp hurried away from his friend's house, he felt as thoroughly crushed and cursed as it is possible for a man to feel. Without having ever been a deliberate libertine, he was of that full-blooded, enthusiastic temperament, which is inclined to look upon every handsome woman as something to hunt. With his pretty pink and white—but rather too fat face, and curly light hair, he was a general favourite among the ladies, and he knew it.

In speaking to Lydia, and her friend he had no fixed idea of wronging either of them, merely intending to be guided by circumstances. Scraping acquaintance with any pretty girl he might happen to

meet, was one of his favourite recreations; his light, airy, volatile butterfly disposition had always shielded him from inspiring that grand passion which has often altered the life course of a man of more stedfast character.

At a certain age—varying according to the individual—it is evidently the fate of all animals to become infatuated with one or more of the opposite sex. Among the lower organisations—where no difficulties are raised by differences of caste, and by the absolute necessity of keeping up a position at least equal to that of the contracting parties' parents—the procedure is simple, marriage follows as a matter of course, divorce occasions no expense, and but little ill-feeling. Man's inordinate and ever increasing craving for fine food, and gorgeous apparel, has altered all this, and has rendered the average female unable to maintain herself by her own unaided exertions in anything more than what have been for countless centuries considered, the bare necessities

of life. Consequently, woman has to find a consort, and must enchant him sufficiently to induce him to almost irrevocably undertake the expense of providing for her as long as she shall live. Owing to the present keenness of the struggle for genteel existence, the ordinary male is generally unable to provide for a spouse as soon as he arrives at a marriageable age. Therefore he not unnaturally endeavours to derive the greatest possible amount of pleasure from female society without committing himself to any pledge of maintenance. The result is unpleasant to both sexes, especially so to the weaker, who have hardly any aim or ambition, or occupation, beyond that of finding a suitably endowed mate.

Percy Goldripp, however, could have married at a very early age, and for this reason he was not likely to marry till late in life, or perhaps not at all; he could hardly fail to know that the state of the matrimonial market caused him to be considered such a prize that he could well

afford to enjoy for a considerable time, the pleasant task of picking and choosing some paragon of virtue and beauty from among the pretty girls with whom he might be brought in contact. In making the acquaintance of Lydia, he had merely intended to while away an hour or two in pleasant company, and to shape his conduct according to the freedom with which his advances were received. Partial however, as he was to female society, when he met Lydia, as the wife of his especially dear friend; he felt that sooner than that such a complication should have arisen, he would have foresworn the sex for ever. Like most rakes he considered the slightest indiscretion in woman to be unpardonable, and that the faintest breath of suspicion totally disqualified a woman from ever becoming a wife; not that he had the deliberate intention of dooming to perpetual spinsterhood any girl whom he might casually address, and who did not repulse him. Either he never thought sufficiently of the matter for this phase to

occur to him, or he thought it a case to which the maxim *caveat emptor* especially applied. His mother had frequently reproved him for the lightness of his conduct towards females; but he had thought her merely fidgetty when she said, "A man cannot make acquaintance with a young woman without its having a distinct influence on his whole life;" it had not occurred to him that on such a small place as the earth, people who particularly wish to remain separate, are sure to meet; that its inhabitants act and react on each other like a colony of ants.

The joyous anticipations of the long voyage in his father's splendid clipper ship "Medusa," the thoughts of the pleasant people he should meet, the lounge on deck in the cool of the evening, the funny things to be said in the weekly paper he meant to conduct, the sport he would have in shooting gulls, or any other stray birds, beasts, or fishes, with the revolving pea rifle he had bought on purpose,—for he

was not sufficiently reflective to appreciate the fact, that the lower animals have at least as much enjoyment as man in the mere sense of existence,—all these foretastes of enjoyment gave place to a settled gloom which almost amounted to a presentiment, that he would never see his friend again, and that it would be better if he were not to do so.

Very early indeed he went to bed that night. Next morning the train took him towards Dungeness, where the “Medusa” was lying, waiting for a fair wind.

Exhilarated by the sea breezes, things seemed a little less black, and he decided on writing Herbert a long letter of explanation and contrition.

In all there were nearly three hundred individuals on board, including a large number of steerage passengers, and it was nearly ten o'clock before the hum of voices was at all hushed.

Sitting down in his little cabin with pen in hand, and paper before him, resting his head on his hand, Herbert fell into a pro-

longed and painful reverie, in which his gay search after conquest seemed much less innocent than it had hitherto done.

For nearly an hour he sat thus, and then he began to write. A little before twelve o'clock the letter was finished, and addressed to Herbert's private house, ready to be given to the pilot when he should leave the ship.

In the act of putting the letter in his pocket, Percy felt the ship receive a somewhat severe shock. Going up on deck without any great haste or alarm, the first thing he heard was a voice crying out, "Stand by us, we shall sink! she's filling forrard!" and then the steerage passengers came swarming on deck like a hive of bees, women crying, and men swearing, so that nothing could be heard distinctly.

The "Medusa" had been struck by a large iron steamer going at considerable speed, which immediately reversed her engines to clear herself, and steamed away on her course, with as little loss of

time as possible, followed by the hoarse shouts of some of the "Medusa's" crew. The Captain had come on deck as soon as anyone, and on seeing the position of affairs, he ordered the boats to be lowered, and blue lights to be burnt; many ships lying in sight saw them, but having no positive means of knowing that they were not being used as fireworks, it was hardly to be expected that crews would take the trouble of lowering boats to row a mile or two in the dark on the chance of being laughed at for their pains.

Two of the ship's boats were sunk by overcrowding almost as soon as they touched the water; when the third one was lowered, the Captain, revolver in hand, threatened to shoot the first man who disobeyed his orders.

Many women were saved, but many more were drowned, for hardly had the boats left the ship's side than it was easy to see that she was fast settling down, down, and in less than twenty minutes from the time of the collision she sank,

leaving little more than her topmasts above water.

Those who were not sucked under, climbed into the rigging, among these was Percy Goldripp, who was far too well bred to push himself anywhere, even were pushing a matter of life and death.

When the vessel began to settle, he had climbed into the rigging with the natural instinct of preservation, but from the first he had looked death in the face with the calm self possession which always distinguishes a gentleman. It was a cold November night, his limbs became numb, gradually his circulation grew weaker, and life seemed less worth retaining, his fingers could hold on no longer, he sank into the waves, and died almost without a struggle.

Next morning every mouth was full of the shocking catastrophe—nearly two hundred and fifty lives lost within sight of land. People who would have hardly given a thought about the engulfment of ten thousand fellow creatures in Mexico, felt

—when they read the minute accounts in the newspapers—almost as if they had lost a relative, although the unfortunates in the “Medusa” were as little likely to influence the lives of most Englishmen as the hypothetical Mexicans, so that grief would seem to be not less conventional than the other emotions. Bitter execrations went forth against the captain and crew of the runaway steamer; few were sufficiently tolerant to suggest that it was quite possible her officers might have been in ignorance of the severe nature of the damage inflicted; and that dishonesty in trying to avoid payment might be the full extent of their crime.

Herbert grieved over the loss of his friend as much as if no complication had arisen. On the day after the wreck his body was washed ashore, and Herbert received the letter which had been written so short a time before the death of its writer. The ink was somewhat blurred by soaking in the water, but still perfectly legible.

Lydia looked over her husband's shoulder while he read the letter. It ran thus :—

“ DEAR HERBERT :—

“ I cannot leave England without writing you a few lines on what I consider the most dreadful thing that could have happened to either of us. What you have done under the circumstances I can't imagine, for I know not what I should do myself. To speak of the subject at all, seems like opening an old wound ; but I cannot bear that you should think me worse than I really am ; indiscreet and thoughtless, I certainly was, but nothing worse. You shall judge for yourself. Walking up the Strand one evening, I happened to pick up the glove of a young lady who was walking just before me, with your present wife. I managed to enter into conversation with them, and persuaded them to go to the theatre with me, the latter being with difficulty prevailed upon by her friend. On coming out of the theatre, the two were separated, and I induced your wife to take

supper with me. The excitement seemed to produce a strange effect on her, for before she had eaten or drunk anything, she went into a sort of fainting swoon—I don't know how else to describe it. Being unable to rouse her, I left her in the care of the landlord's wife ; and—you know my thoughtless nature—I had hardly bestowed a thought on the matter till the other day. I have a sort of presentiment that we shall never meet again ; in fact it would be impossible to associate on the old footing, so I shall make arrangements to remain in Sydney, or to go to Shanghai where I have as you know several acquaintances. I shall look anxiously for a letter from you, and trust, that however much pain he may have unwittingly caused, you will not think much the worse of

“ Your affectionate friend,

“ PERCY GOLDRIPP.”

Mr. Blacklock, having received the thrashing, for which Mrs. Dumlin had negotiated with her brother, the *ci-devant*

“little skelington,”—became a prey to the blackest despair, for he knew that his chances of obtaining the five hundred pounds were quite at an end.

To keep away from the pleasant food-producing spot in Spitalfields market, was as impossible as it is for a fly to avoid the treacle pot, even although it may have an inkling of a probable and lingering death ; and one fine afternoon, after having fully enjoyed the pleasures of the Dumlin table, on slouching out of the creaking swing doors, he was accosted by that intelligent detective officer, Sergeant Ketcher, who having been told exactly where to find the wanted one, had proceeded to find him in the most systematic manner. It appeared from the short preliminary conversation, which passed between the two, that Mr. Blacklock had—without authority—signed the name of a miller—from whom he used to buy his flour—across a bill of exchange, for three hundred and fifty pounds. The miller had not unnaturally resented this liberty, and

in the result, Mr. Blacklock performed a rather monotonous athletic exercise for five years, on food which compared very unfavourably with the substantial fare of the Dumlin coffee house.

Sergeant Ketcher felt no more compunction about his work, than a sheriff's officer does in executing a writ of *fi fa*; so, one man's livelihood is another man's destruction, and we all prey on each other. It is painful to waste five years of a fellow creature's life; but it is not less necessary to keep the forger out of mischief than it is to kill tigers or poisonous snakes.

THE END.

DECEMBER, 1873.

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Generally speaking, in criticising a novel we confine our observations to the merits of the author. In this case we must make an exception, and say something as to the publisher. The *Mistress of Langdale Hall* does not come before us in the stereotyped three-volume shape, with rambling type, ample margins, and nominally a guinea and a half to pay. On the contrary, this new aspirant to public admiration appears in the modest guise of a single graceful volume, and we confess that we are disposed to give a kindly welcome to the author, because we may flatter ourselves that she is in some measure a *prodigée* of our own. A few weeks ago an article appeared in our columns censuring the prevailing fashion of publishing novels at nominal and fancy prices. Necessarily, we dealt a good deal in commonplaces, the absurdity of the fashion being so obvious. We explained, what is well known to every one interested in the matter, that the regulation price is purely illusory. The publisher in reality has to drive his own bargain with the libraries, who naturally beat him down. The author suffers, the trade suffers, and the libraries do not gain. Arguing that a palpable absurdity must be exploded some day unless all the world is qualified for Bedlam, we felt ourselves on tolerably safe ground when we ventured to predict an approaching revolution. Judging from the preface to this book, we may conjecture that it was partly on our hint that Mr. Tinsley has published. As all prophets must welcome events that tend to the speedy accomplishment of their predictions, we confess ourselves gratified by the promptitude with which Mr. Tinsley has acted, and we heartily wish his venture success. He recognises that a reformation so radical must be a work of time, and at first may possibly seem to defeat its object. For it is plain that the public must first be converted to a proper regard for its own interest; and, by changing the borrowing for the buying system, must come in to buy the publisher out. He must look, moreover, to the support and imitation of his brethren of the trade. We doubt not he has made the venture after all due deliberation, and that we may rely on his determination seconding his

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enterprise. All prospectuses of new undertakings tend naturally to exaggeration, but success will be well worth the waiting for, should it be only the shadow of that on which Mr. Tinsley reckons. He gives some surprising figures; he states some startling facts; and, as a practical man, he draws some practical conclusions. He quotes a statement of Mr. Charles Reade's, to the effect that three publishers in the United States had disposed of no less than 370,000 copies of Mr. Reade's latest novel. He estimates that the profits on that sale—the book being published at a dollar—must amount to £25,000. Mr. Reade, of course, has a name, and we can conceive that his faults and blemishes may positively recommend themselves to American taste. But Mr. Tinsley remarks that if a publisher could sell 70,000 copies in any case, there would still be £5,000 of clear gain; and even if the new system had a much more moderate success than that, all parties would still profit amazingly. For Mr. Tinsley calculates the profits of a sale of 2,000 copies of a three volume edition at £1,000; and we should fancy the experience of most authors would lead them to believe he overstates it. It will be seen that at all events the new speculation promises brilliantly, and reason and common-sense conspire to tell us that the reward must come to him who has patience to wait. *Palmar qui meruit ferat*, and may he have his share of the profits too. Meanwhile, here we have the first volume of Mr. Tinsley's new series in most legible type, in portable form, and with a sufficiently attractive exterior. The price is four shillings, and, the customary trade deduction being made to circulating libraries, it leaves them without excuse should they deny it to the order of their customers.

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